The BeWell Mentor Wellness Project at Stellenbosch University in South Africa

An Overview

By Dr Alten du Plessis
15 September 2015

“Without data, you are just another person with an opinion.”
- Andreas Schleicher & W. Edwards Deming

“It’s the little details that are vital. Little things make big things happen.”
- John Wooden
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Executive Summary

In 2015 Stellenbosch University utilised 577 trained mentors and head mentors to guide 3881 first-year students (called mentees) during their first six to nine months at the university. The mentors were senior students who underwent intensive training over a couple of days in September 2014 and in January 2015. The mentees were first-year students and were part of 488 mentoring groups. They stayed in 41 residences and private wards on either the main campus in Stellenbosch or on the Tygerberg campus. The team of mentors and head mentors were supported by a team of university staff members, including residence heads, cluster coordinators and staff members from Student Affairs. A huge team of more than 600 people was part of this very unique and huge effort - most probably one of the largest out-of-the-class first-year interventions in the world! Since its inception in 2013 more than 1500 mentors and head mentors have assisted more than 10 000 first-year students in the programme.

What makes this project so special?

Stellenbosch University has a very long and proud history of mentoring, dating back more than forty years. Traditionally (before 2013) the objectives were, broadly speaking, to help first-year students to adjust to university life, to overcome personal barriers (by referring them to professional staff) and to provide general psycho-social support – mainly a deficit or problem-focused approach that assisted the needy but did not have real meaning to the rest who were “sort of okay”. In 2013 the university changed its approach to a developmental approach that still catered for adjustment and problem-solving, but also focused on the optimisation of the potential of all students in the system, including both the mentees and mentors – a more holistic and systemic approach that concentrates on developing the whole person instead of only addressing problem areas. The wellness model of Hettler was chosen as the vehicle to accomplish this. This developmental approach to student success is quite unique in the world, especially because it is done on such a big scale, and outside of the main curriculum. At Stellenbosch this project is known as BeWell.

Why wellness?

Stellenbosch University adopted a wellness model that looks at wellness in terms of the physical, emotional, intellectual, occupational, social and spiritual dimensions. Research findings from around the world confirm that the following are good reasons why this wellness approach is a good idea:

1. Wellness enhances student success (well students perform better academically than less well students).
2. Wellness promotes happiness, well-being and health (well students are happier and healthier, physically and mentally).
3. Wellness promotes the development of graduate attributes (well students have characteristics that are sought after by employers).
4. Wellness programmes (like the university’s BeWell programme) will lighten the burden of support services (like the Centre for Student Counselling and Development) – survey results of approximately 40 000 students at Stellenbosch since 2002 consistently indicate that large percentages of first-year students will benefit from wellness enhancing support.
programmes, and the university’s support services do not have the capacity to serve that many students per year effectively.

5. The wellness approach is a strength-based and evidence-based approach and aims to optimise the potential of all students (both “strugglers” and “flourishers”).

Overall Stellenbosch University’s wellness approach has the aim of creating a “flourishing” campus culture. Because Stellenbosch University is now in its third year of implementing this approach it means that the majority of her undergraduate student population now had some kind of exposure to it – a world’s first, and a good start in building a flourishing culture.

How was wellness integrated?

Six wellness cards, one for each of the wellness dimensions, were designed during 2012. These cards are meant to be used by mentors during their mentoring sessions with their mentoring groups. The cards contain definitions of wellness and some guiding questions and activities to help mentors guide their mentees in discussions about the various aspects of wellness and to help them coach their mentees (and themselves!) to adopt a lifestyle that promotes health, happiness, well-being and academic success. Mentors still had to conduct the traditional sessions (pre-2013) during the welcoming period, as well as individual sessions (general psycho-social support) during the course of the year. They, however, now had a set of cards (a tool) to guide their mentees during an additional 6 to 10 one hour sessions to facilitate growth and positive discussions. The focus changed from a deficit-approach pre-2013 to a wellness and developmental approach since 2013.

An outstanding and very unique feature of the Stellenbosch approach is the personalisation of each student’s wellness development: All mentors and mentees are supported by their own individualized and secure wellness websites with assessments, ebooks, audiobooks, e-workshops, tracking tools for card sessions, journals, profile pages and personalised leaderboards. Online well-being enhancing activities currently include e-workshops on wellness, grit and growth mindsets, and a gratitude and happiness journal (addressing some of the factors that influence academic performance – by mastering them students will have an even better chance to be successful).

All BeWell activities are tracked and both mentors and mentees record details about their sessions and other interactions online, mostly via their cell phones or tablets.

Did students engage with BeWell?

The BeWell system has grown tremendously over the last three years since its introduction in 2013. The following facts summarize this growth, and the engagement of mentors and mentees in 2015:

1. The number of registered mentoring groups grew from 409 in 2013 to 488 in 2015.
2. A total of 1897 mentoring sessions were logged in 2013. Up until September the 8\textsuperscript{th} 2015 6250 mentoring sessions have been logged by mentors. Assuming that each session lasts for approximately 30 minutes that equates to approximately 130 days of continuous mentoring, 24 hours a day – that is more than four months of non-stop mentoring (if all sessions were scheduled one after the other).
3. It was not compulsory for mentees to log sessions, but 3490 sessions were logged by mentees during 2015 (compared to 1074 in 2013).
4. In 2015 954 submissions were made to the e-workshop on wellness and more than 200 to the e-workshop on grit and a growth mindset.

5. More than 300 pages of qualitative feedback about the quality and value of mentoring sessions were collected during 2015, including reflections by mentors on how they have grown as persons and how the skills they have learnt in the process will make them more employable (in their opinion) once they enter the job market one day. Since the reflections were incorporated within the BeWell family of websites in 2014 3021 reflections have been submitted by mentors – mentors make submissions on three different occasions during their terms (after the welcoming period, at the end of the first semester and just before the end of their terms in the second semester).

6. 3881 first-year students were part of mentoring groups in 2015 and the average size of a mentoring group was 7.95.

7. The average attendance rate for all 6250 mentoring sessions was 71% in 2015 – on average 7 out of 10 mentees therefore attended each mentoring session.


9. 577 mentors and head mentors self registered in 2015 and were thus part of BeWell 2015.

10. 104 mentors qualified for a wellness facilitator’s certificate.

11. 2826 personal wellness websites of mentors and mentees were created in 2015, and they were updated more than 70 times (mentors and mentees had to register to get access to this service).

**How did mentors and mentees experience the mentoring sessions?**

It is compulsory for mentors to log all the mentoring sessions they have with their mentoring groups. They complete an online form within which they identify the type of session that was conducted, register which mentees were present at the session, list the lesson(s) they have learnt in conducting the session, rate the quality of the session on a ten point scale from their perspective as a mentor, and rate the personal value they have gotten from their involvement in the session, also on a ten point scale. Up until the 4th of September 2015 the 2015 cohort of mentors logged 6194 sessions.

Mentees are encouraged to also log sessions and rate the quality and value of sessions from their perspective as mentees. Up until the 4th of September 2015 the 2015 cohort of mentees logged 3490 sessions.

The overall average quality ratings for both mentors and mentees are high: 8.11 for mentors and 8.6 for mentees. The higher ratings of mentees possibly mean that mentors have done a better job than they themselves thought, and this is actually good news and a complement for them. Similar results were obtained for the value ratings.

It is thus safe to conclude that both mentors and mentees experience the sessions positively and get value out of the mentoring process – on average more than 70% also attended their sessions during 2015 – a higher attendance rate than some courses that are part of the main curriculum!

**Did BeWell have an impact on academic performance?**

The preliminary indicators are that BeWell did indeed have a positive impact on the academic performance of first-year students and mentors, but the project team soon realized that this is a
very complex issue with many angles (and many variables) to consider and more research need to be done before definite conclusions can be drawn. Preliminary results, however, indicate the following:

- High logging mentors perform better academically than low loggers.
- Engaged mentees, i.e. those who were very actively involved in mentoring sessions, outperform the rest.
- Wellness card sessions had an impressive positive effect on the academic performance of mentees.
- Residences that made the most progress academically since the second semester in 2013 were also the most engaged in BeWell in 2015 (most mentoring sessions per mentoring group).

A meaningful application of data analytics within this environment is to identify "non-academic" predictors of academic performance, and to use this information to further improve the developmental resources offered within BeWell. BeWell data from 2013, 2014 and 2015 confirmed what other researchers world-wide have found: Grit, a growth mindset and a well-balanced wellness lifestyle are all important predictors of performance at university level. More students should therefore be encouraged to utilise the available BeWell resources on these topics.

**Did BeWell have an impact on wellness and personal growth?**

Mentors must submit three reflections during their term. Since the beginning of 2014 mentors have submitted more than 3000 reflections, literally hundreds of pages. One of the reflection questions has to do with development of wellness factors and personal growth; another one asks about employability skills. The following two quotations were chosen from the thousands that were received in an attempt to reflect something of what many of them emphasized in their answers.

“The experience until this far is really amazing. I love seeing the growth in the lives of the first years. I can almost not believe the exponential jump they have taken in such a short time. I feel that I have grown tremendously the past couple of months, not just as being a mentor to the first years, but a friend as well. I am now able to solve problems in a very short period of time and use my knowledge of wellness to assist the first years in their academic success. I have a deeper understanding of the integration of the components of wellness and I can confidently say that the wellness program has drastically impacted my own life.”

“As a post-graduate student I am now planning on entering a professional career and I believe my two terms served as mentor will help me in the following ways: 1. It has made me a more self-confident person. Given the responsibility and authority that go in hand with being a mentor I have grown as a person. I learnt how to work with people better and it has definitely improved my communication skills. 2. It has taught me how to deal with conflict. Dealing with the issues and problems brought to me by my mentees I attained valuable skills regarding the calm resolution of conflict situations. 3. The BeWell program in particular has once again highlighted to me the importance of my personal well-being and in learning all these things to my mentees I started to incorporate it into my personal life as well. The physical aspect of wellness was emphasized to me and made a big difference in my daily routine.”
Broadcasting the good news

The BeWell team has already made 17 presentations related to the BeWell project at national and international conferences in South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Russia, Netherlands, Spain, Hungary, Switzerland and Greece, to a variety of audiences. The goal of this? Benchmarking against the best, sharing the BeWell story, learning from others, seeking new and innovative ways to further improve, and above all, to apply these new insights to better serve every student at Stellenbosch and make every Matie well, successful and a “flourisher”!

Need more Information about BeWell?

Contact Dr Alten du Plessis at sadp@sun.ac.za.
1. A Campus-wide Mentoring System for First-year Students

In 2015 Stellenbosch University utilised 577 trained mentors and head mentors to guide 3881 mentees during their first six to nine months at university. The mentors were senior students who underwent intensive training over a couple of days in September 2014 and in January 2015. The mentees were first-year students and were part of 488 mentoring groups. They stayed in 41 residences and private wards on either the main campus in Stellenbosch or on the Tygerberg campus. The team of mentors and head mentors were supported by a team of university staff members, some in residences (including residence heads, cluster coordinators and mentoring assistants), others were members of the BeWell Mentor Wellness Project Team (staff members from Student Affairs (Centre for Student Structures and Communities and the Centre for Student Counselling and Development) and Institutional Research and Planning). A huge team of more than 600 people was therefore part of this comprehensive effort. See figure 1.

Figure 1: A Campus-wide Mentoring System for First-year Students

Stellenbosch University has a very long and proud history of mentoring, dating back more than forty years. Traditionally (before 2013) the objectives were, broadly speaking, to help first-year students to adjust to university life, to overcome personal barriers (by referring them to professional staff) and to provide general psycho-social support — mainly a deficit or problem-focused approach that assisted the needy but did not have real meaning to the rest who were “sort of okay”. In 2013 the university changed its approach to a developmental approach that still catered for adjustment and
problem-solving, but also focused on the optimisation of the potential of all students in the system, including both the mentees and mentors – a more holistic and systemic approach that concentrates on developing the whole person instead of only addressing problem areas. The wellness model of Hettler was chosen as the vehicle to accomplish this. The BeWell Mentor Wellness Project Team was formed in 2012 to lead this process (see appendix 1).

2. Why Wellness?

Stellenbosch University adopted a wellness model that looks at wellness in terms of the physical, emotional, intellectual, occupational, social and spiritual dimensions. A comprehensive literature study revealed that wellness related factors from all six dimensions (e.g. physical exercise, emotional intelligence, self-control, grit, conscientiousness, hope, optimism, type of mind-set, equanimity, positivity, character strengths, curiosity and mental toughness) affect academic achievement (see resource in appendix 4). Academic support and personal development efforts within the university’s mentoring project therefore also had to have the aim of addressing all these factors.

Scientific evidence further highlights the following reasons why the wellness approach is a good idea:

1. Wellness enhances student success (well students perform better academically than less well students).
2. Wellness promotes happiness, well-being and health (well students are happier and healthier, physically and mentally).
3. Wellness promotes the development of graduate attributes (well students have characteristics that are sought after by employers).
4. Wellness programmes (like the university’s BeWell programme) will lighten the burden of support services (like the Centre for Student Counselling and Development) – survey results of approximately 40 000 students since 2002 consistently indicate that large percentages of first-year students will benefit from wellness enhancing support programmes, and the university’s support services do not have the capacity to serve that many students per year effectively (see appendix 2 for the results up until 2014).
5. The proposed wellness approach is a strength-based approach (and evidence-based) and aims to optimise the potential of all students (both “strugglers” and “flourishers”).

Overall the wellness approach thus has the aim of creating a “flourishing” campus.

3. How Wellness was Integrated within the BeWell Mentoring System

Six wellness cards (one for each of the wellness dimensions) were designed during 2012 by the BeWell Mentor Wellness Project team (many of the most dynamic optimum living coaches in the world follow a similar model). These cards are meant to be used by mentors during their mentoring sessions with their mentoring groups. The cards contain definitions of wellness and some guiding questions and activities to help mentors guide their mentees in discussions about the various aspects of wellness and to help them coach their mentees (and themselves!) to adopt a lifestyle that promotes health, happiness, well-being and academic success. Mentors still had to conduct the traditional sessions (pre-2013) during the welcoming period, as well as individual sessions (general
psycho-social support) during the course of the year. They, however, now had a set of cards (a tool) to guide their mentees during an additional 6 to 10 one hour sessions to facilitate growth and positive discussions. The focus changed from a deficit-approach pre-2013 to a wellness and developmental approach since 2013. See figure 2 below (and appendix 3) to learn more about the cards.

Figure 2: Six wellness cards (see appendix 3).

The annual training of mentors nowadays is organised around the wellness concept. Training videos (see appendix 4) were also produced to make sure that everyone is properly equipped and prepared for their task. Because Stellenbosch University is now in its third year of implementing the wellness cards it means that the majority of our undergraduate population now had some kind of exposure to it – in our opinion a world’s first! See figure 3 for a screenshot of one of these videos.

Another outstanding and unique feature of our approach is the personalisation of each student’s wellness development: All mentors and mentees are supported by their own individualized and secure wellness websites with assessments, ebooks, audiobooks, e-workshops, tracking tools for card sessions, journals, profile pages and personalised leaderboards. Online well-being enhancing activities currently include e-workshops on wellness, grit and growth mindsets, and a gratitude and happiness journal (addressing some of the factors that influence academic performance).

Figure 4 summarises the main component of such a personalised wellness website. Figure 5 demonstrates that multimedia resources are available for each of the six dimensions.
Figure 3: A demonstration video of a typical wellness card session (see appendix 4 for a link).

Figure 4: Contents in a nutshell of a personal wellness website

Figure 5: Multimedia resources in the wellness e-library of each site
4. Tracking, Gamification and Management Information

All activities within the BeWell system are tracked: Mentoring sessions as well as all other wellness enhancing activities undertaken. The logging of sessions by mentors and mentees (and others, like mentor reflections) allows the university to

- Scientifically manage the programme;
- Measure the impact on academic performance;
- Measure the experience of both mentors and mentees;
- Measure the impact on the development of mentors, including graduate attributes;
- Provide individualised progress reports to mentors and managers within the system;
- Monitor activity levels within the system; and
- Do research to continuously improve the system.

Gamification principles were also integrated within the individualized websites of students in 2014 to enhance engagement, competition amongst residences and private wards (who can outperform others in terms of mentoring support and wellness development) and motivation (to take part in wellness card sessions as well as the other activities offered on a mentee’s and mentor’s personal wellness website). See appendix 5 for more detail about the gamification of BeWell.

The BeWell Management Information System (MIS) incorporates all of the above tracking data within easy-to-use MIS websites – one for the system as a whole and separate ones for each living environment (residence or private ward). Its aim is to empower head mentors and other BeWell managers to effectively manage all the mentoring and wellness development processes within the system. Each MIS allows its user to:

1. Study a dashboard summary of all mentoring activities;
2. Monitor mentor registrations;
3. Monitor mentoring group registrations;
4. Monitor mentee registrations;
5. Monitor mentor reflections completed;
6. Monitor the number, quality and value of mentoring sessions, from the perspective of both mentors and mentees;
7. Monitor attendance statistics of all mentoring sessions; and
8. Monitor group compositions (numbers, members and sizes).

Figure 6 outlines the components of each MIS. Additional tools on these MIS websites include:

1. Leaderboards for mentors and mentees;
2. News feeds for mentors and mentees (including Twitter feeds);
3. Achievement records of mentors and mentees (progress reports in terms of points earned, levels reached (from gamification) and certificates earned (both mentors and mentees can qualify for wellness certificates)); and
4. Mentor reflection reports.

Figure 7 highlights the availability of these additional management tools.
5. Engagement and Growth

The BeWell system has grown tremendously over the last three years since its introduction in 2013. The following facts summarize this growth, and the engagement of mentors and mentees in 2015:

1. The number of registered mentoring groups grew from 409 in 2013 to 488 in 2015.
2. A total of 1897 mentoring sessions were logged in 2013. Up until September the 8\textsuperscript{th} 2015 6250 mentoring sessions have been logged by mentors. Assuming that each session lasts for approximately 30 minutes that equates to approximately 130 days of continuous mentoring, 24 hours a day – that is more than four months of non-stop mentoring (if all sessions were scheduled one after the other).
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4. In 2015 954 submissions were made to the e-workshop on wellness and more than 200 to the e-workshop on grit and a growth mindset.
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6. 3881 first-year students were part of mentoring groups in 2015 and the average size of a mentoring group was 7.95.

7. The average attendance rate for all 6250 mentoring sessions was 71% in 2015 – on average 7 out of 10 mentees therefore attended each mentoring session.


9. 577 mentors and head mentors self registered in 2015 and were thus part of BeWell 2015.

10. 104 mentors qualified for a wellness facilitator’s certificate.

11. 2826 personal wellness websites of mentors and mentees were created in 2015, and they were updated more than 70 times (mentors and mentees had to register to get access to this service).

Figure 8 provides a nutshell summary of BeWell 2015 (in numbers, including detail about the multimedia resources that are available on the personal wellness website of each mentor and mentee).

Figure 8: BeWell 2015 in Numbers

6. Impact on Academic Performance, Experience and Development

In evaluating the impact of interventions such as BeWell one must measure, or at least try to describe, the impact on the academic performance of participants, the overall experience of participants and the personal development of participants.

In order to be 100% scientifically correct in measuring the impact of such interventions on the academic performance of students one must actually conduct a randomized control group
experiment. In BeWell’s case this was not possible because the project team wanted to apply what science has already proven elsewhere (well students outperform less well students – see the section “Why wellness?”) to the benefit of all the university’s first-year students – that was one of the assumptions. We shall, however, provide evidence that implies that it did indeed impact academic performance.

Overwhelming evidence will also be provided that demonstrates that both mentors and mentees had a positive experience in engaging with BeWell, and that mentors have grown tremendously because of their involvement.

**6.1. Impact on Academic Performance**

A number of important research questions regarding the mentoring process and the optimal composition of mentoring groups were raised at the end of the 2014 cycle. Some of them are represented in figure 9 (a copy of a slide that was used in a previous presentation about BeWell). Preliminary work was done at the end of 2014 in order to answer these questions, but it was decided to wait for more data before definite conclusions will be drawn.

"Without data, you are just another person with an opinion" - Andreas Schleicher

Figure 9: Research Questions for the Future

We shall, however, use our findings regarding the first hypothesis “High loggers will perform better academically” to say something about the influence participation in BeWell possibly had on the academic performance of the mentors of 2014. Other influences which will be investigated are the possible influence BeWell had on the academic performance of mentees (the 2015 cohort) and the possible influence BeWell might have had since 2013 on the academic performance of residences as a whole.

**6.1.1. High loggers perform better academically**

The semester 1 weighted averages of the mentors of 2014 were compared with the number of mentoring sessions they have conducted/logged. Sessions were grouped into the following seven categories:
1. NONE: No sessions were logged.
2. N1TO3: Between 1 and 3 sessions were logged.
3. N4TO6: Between 4 and 6 sessions were logged.
4. N7TO9: Between 7 and 9 sessions were logged.
5. N10TO12: Between 10 and 12 sessions were logged.
6. N13TO15: Between 13 and 15 sessions were logged.
7. PLUS15: More than 15 sessions were logged.

A substantial larger percentage of mentors who logged 13 or more sessions (N13TO15 and PLUS15) achieved a semester 1 weighted average of 65% or more than the rest (NONE, N1TO3, ..., N10TO12). See figure 10. 31 mentors logged between 13 and 15 sessions and 109 logged more than 15 sessions. This provide some evidence that high loggers perform better than low loggers. The reason for this may be closely linked to their conscientiousness, which is a very good predictor of academic performance (see “Why Wellness?” section). The mentors with higher levels of conscientiousness therefore most probably performed better than the rest, and his is also reflected in the way they approached their mentoring responsibilities.

![Figure 10](image)

**Figure 10**: High loggers outperform low loggers academically.

6.1.2. Engaged mentees outperform the rest

The possible influence of BeWell participation on the academic performance of first-year students was investigated by first dividing the 2015 first-year student cohort in different groups depending on the number of mentoring sessions they have attended and by then comparing the first semester academic performance of these groups. The results can be found in figures 11 and 12, and will be explained below. Two closely related performance indicators were investigated, namely the percentage of first semester credits passed and semester 1 weighted averages.
Figure 11 indicates that first-year students who did not attend any mentoring sessions passed 80.16% of their first semester credits. Mentees who attended at least some mentoring sessions passed 87.32% of their first semester credits, mentees who attended 5 or more mentoring sessions passed 88.74% of their first semester credits, mentees who attended 10 or more mentoring sessions passed 90.24% of their first semester credits, and mentees who attended 15 or more mentoring sessions passed 92.90% of their first semester credits. The psycho-social support offered by the BeWell mentoring groups therefore seems to have a positive influence on the academic performance of first-year students.

The possible influence of engagement in wellness card sessions were also investigated. Mentees who attended at least some mentoring sessions but zero wellness card sessions passed 85.53% of their first semester credits, mentees who attended 3 or more wellness card sessions passed 90.14% of their first semester credits, mentees who attended 5 or more wellness card sessions passed 90.09% of their first semester credits, and mentees who attended 8 or more wellness card sessions passed 93.22% of their first semester credits (the group with the highest pass rate). It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the wellness card sessions had an impressive positive effect on the academic performance of mentees.

Figure 11: Percentage of first semester credits passed by different groups of first-year students.

Figure 12 indicates that first-year students who did not attend any mentoring sessions achieved a semester 1 weighted average of 54.69%. Mentees who attended at least some mentoring sessions achieved a semester 1 weighted average of 59.38%, mentees who attended 5 or more mentoring sessions achieved a semester 1 weighted average of 60.61%, mentees who attended 10 or more mentoring sessions achieved a semester 1 weighted average of 61.70%, and mentees who attended 15 or more mentoring sessions achieved a semester 1 weighted average of 63.22%. The psycho-social support offered by the BeWell mentoring groups therefore seems to have a positive influence on the academic performance of first-year students – those attending 15 or more sessions did 8.53% better than those who did not attend any mentoring sessions.
The possible influence of engagement in wellness card sessions were also investigated. Mentees who attended at least some mentoring sessions but zero wellness card sessions achieved a semester 1 weighted average of 57.92%, mentees who attended 3 or more wellness card sessions sessions achieved a semester 1 weighted average of 61.66%, mentees who attended 5 or more wellness card sessions sessions achieved a semester 1 weighted average of 62.02%, and mentees who attended 8 or more wellness card sessions achieved a semester 1 weighted average of 63.14%. It is therefore again reasonable to conclude that the wellness card sessions had an impressive positive effect on the academic performance of mentees – even the group who attended at least some sessions that may have included one or more wellness card sessions did better (59.38%) than those who attended at least some sessions that did not include any wellness card sessions (57.92%).

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**Figure 12:** First semester weighted averages of different groups of first-year students.

**Conclusion:** Engaged mentees outperformed less engaged mentees and the rest of the first-years. The more sessions mentees attended the better they performed academically. Wellness card sessions specifically seem to have an impressive positive influence on the performance of first-year students.

### 6.1.3. Residences that made the most progress academically were also the most engaged in BeWell in 2015 (hypothesis to be investigated)

The LAPS (Leefplek Akademiese Prestasie Stelsel / Living space Academic Performance System) is used by the Centre for Student Structures and Communities at Stellenbosch University to monitor the academic performance of undergraduate students within 51 different living environments on the Stellenbosch and Tygerberg campuses (residences, private wards, public private partnerships and clusters). Managers within the various living environments all get access to the system. The system is updated twice a year. The first update is done in March immediately after all the marks are finalised for the degree ceremony that takes place in March. The second update is made in August after the finalization of the semester 1 results.
A whole range of performance indicators are used within the system to report on the academic performance of first-year, non-final-year and final-year students. Living environments are ranked on each of these performance indicators so that managers can, for example, see whether their environment is doing better or worse than the rest, and whether or not their environments have made progress since the previous year (data for the last five years are displayed), in terms of actual performance, but also in terms of ranking position.

A combination of these lists of rankings are used annually in August to determine the living environments that made the most (and least) progress academically over the last two cycles of the system – another list is compiled. The number of positions each living environment has gained, or lost, are calculated for each of the lists (rankings) and a grand total is calculated for each environment that represents the number of ranking positions it has gained, or lost, between the current cycle and the previous one.

The living environment that made the most progress in the 2014/2015 cycle compared to the 2013/2014 cycle gained 105 positions and is represented by Plus105 in figures 13, 14 and 15 below. Likewise, Plus72 represents the living environment that gained 72 positions and Plus51 the living environment that gained 51 positions. Plus105 is the best performer on this criterion, Plus72 the second best and Plus51 the third best.

The living environment that lost the most positions in the 2014/2015 cycle compared to the 2013/2014 cycle lost 127 positions and is represented by Minus127 in figures 13, 14 and 15 below. Likewise, Minus87 represents the living environment that lost 87 positions and Minus76A and Minus76B the living environments that lost 76 positions. Minus127 is the worst performer on this criterion, Minus87 the second worst and Minus76A and Minus76B jointly the third worst.

In order to find any sign of a relationship between the ranking position of living environments Plus105, Plus72, Plus51, Minus76B, Minus76A, Minus87 and Minus127 and their engagement in BeWell, we have to compare the rankings and engagement in BeWell of these 7 environments. Engagement in BeWell can (amongst others) be expressed in terms of the number of mentoring sessions that were conducted by each mentor per environment, the number of wellness card mentoring sessions that were conducted by each mentor per environment and the average attendance rate of each mentoring session per environment. If the data suggests a relationship between rankings and engagement for 2015, engagement data for 2013 and 2014 should also be investigated for these 7 environments because the gains and losses in ranking positions are based on LAPS data of 2013-2015.

Figure 13 shows that of the seven living environments under the spotlight living environment Plus105 has the most mentoring sessions per mentor for 2015 – remember it is also the living environment that made the most progress academically over the last cycle (semester 2 2014/semester 1 2015) compared with the previous one (semester 2 2013/semester 1 2014). It is also interesting to note that living environments Plus72 and Plus51 have the second and third most mentor sessions per mentor for 2015 – they also occupy the second and third positions in terms of academic progress made. All four living environments that performed the worst have less mentoring sessions logged per mentor for 2015. It therefore appears that a positive relationship may exist between the academic progress of a living environment (at least for these seven) and the average number of mentoring sessions that were conducted per mentor in 2015 in each of these environments.
Figure 13: Average number of mentoring sessions logged per mentor per living space in 2015.

Figure 14 shows that of the seven living environments under the spotlight living environments Plus51 and Plus105 each have more than six wellness card sessions per mentor for 2015 – two of the top three living environments that made the most progress academically over the last cycle (semester 2 2014/semester 1 2015) compared with the previous one (semester 2 2013/semester 1 2014) therefore focussed strongly on wellness during 2015 in their mentoring sessions. Not one of the worst performing living environments logged more than two wellness card sessions per mentor during 2015. It therefore appears that a focus on wellness may impact the academic progress of a living environment positively.

Figure 14: Average number of wellness card sessions logged per mentor per living space in 2015.
Figure 15 shows the average attendance rates of mentoring sessions per living space during 2015. The top three improvers (Plus105, Plus72 and Plus51) all had outstanding and far above average attendance rates. Of the weaker performing living environments only one had a comparable attendance rate to that of the top three improvers. This provides further evidence for our suspicion that a positive relationship exists between academic progress on our ranking system and engagement levels of students within the corresponding living environments.

BeWell was launched at the beginning of 2013 and only 1897 mentoring sessions were logged – not because many more were not conducted, but most probably because the system was still in its infancy. Engagement data for 2013 is therefore not a fair reflection of what went on in the different living environments. Engagement data for 2014 is much more reliable. Table 1 shows the number of mentoring sessions and the number of wellness cards sessions for each of the seven living environments under the spotlight. Attendance rates for the various living environments were not explicitly calculated in the 2014 version of BeWell.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># Sessions / Mentor</th>
<th>#Wellness / Mentor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plus105</td>
<td>25.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plus72</td>
<td>21.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plus51</td>
<td>10.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minus76A</td>
<td>7.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minus76B</td>
<td>14.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minus87</td>
<td>5.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minus127</td>
<td>6.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1**: Engagement levels during 2014 per living space.
The top three improvers (Plus105, Plus72 and Plus51) had high engagement levels in 2014. Since the performance indicators that form the basis of the rankings are calculated by taking the academic performance of first-year, non-final-year and final-year students into consideration, it makes sense that these engagement levels should also be high – they could have contributed to the improved performance in the latest cycle of the more senior students and mentors themselves. The overall high engagement levels could have contributed to the improved performance of the living environment as a whole.

Three of the four weaker performers also had disappointing engagement levels in 2014 and that may have contributed to the weaker performance of their more senior students in the latest cycle in comparison with the previous cycle. Living environment Minus76B is an outlier (in our study of these seven environments).

**Conclusion:** There seems to be some convincing evidence to support the hypothesis that “Residences that made the most progress academically were also the most engaged in BeWell in 2015”. It is, however, strongly suggested that more data must be collected and analysed before a final judgement can be made on whether this hypothesis is true in general.

### 6.2. Impact on the Experience of Mentors and Mentees

It is compulsory for mentors to log all the mentoring sessions they have with their mentoring groups (it takes less than three minutes per session on cell phones). They complete an online form within which they identify the type of session that was conducted, register which mentees were present at the session, list the lesson(s) they have learnt in conducting the session, rate the quality of the session on a ten point scale from their perspective as a mentor, and rate the personal value they have gotten from their involvement in the session, also on a ten point scale. Mentors conduct and log welcoming period sessions, wellness card sessions, individual (one-on-one) sessions, social media sessions (for example via WhatsApp) and other sessions (like participating in a workshop as a group). Up until the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 2015 the 2015 cohort of mentors logged 6194 sessions.

Mentees are encouraged to also log sessions and rate the quality and value of sessions from their respective as mentees. It is, however, not compulsory for them. They use a similar form as the mentors, but they obviously do not provide details about the attendance of others. Up until the 4th of September 2015 the 2015 cohort of mentees logged 3490 sessions.

The quality ratings of mentors and mentees per type of mentoring session are depicted and compared in figure 16 (ten point scores converted to percentages). The overall average ratings for both mentors and mentees are high: 81.1% for mentors and 86% for mentees. The almost consistent higher ratings of mentees possibly mean that mentors have done a better job than they themselves thought, and this is actually good news and a complement for all our mentors. The only exception is the social media sessions where the mentees rate the sessions much lower than already below average ratings of mentors. This may possibly mean that mentoring sessions should rather be conducted face-to-face – in some cases, like for commuter students, social media sessions may be the only option, however, and should therefore still be encouraged.
The value ratings of mentors and mentees per type of mentoring session are depicted and compared in figure 17 (ten point scores converted to percentages). The overall average ratings for both mentors and mentees are high: 80.7% for mentors and 82.8% for mentees. Again the ratings of mentees are consistently higher than those of mentors, with one exception, namely social media sessions. There is an even greater difference here between the value ratings of mentors (76%) and mentees (60.2%) for social media sessions – mentees do not get that much value from them: 22.6% less than from the average session.
It is safe to conclude that both mentors and mentees get value out of the mentoring process.

6.3. Impact on the Personal Development and Employability of Mentors

Mentors must submit three reflections during their term. Since the beginning of 2014 (when this component was incorporated within the BeWell family of websites) mentors have submitted more than 3000 reflections. Two of these reflection questions can directly be linked to the development of wellness factors and personal growth (and by implication also possibly graduate attributes) and employability skills, and are listed below:

1. How did you grow as a mentor and what was your experience? (wellness and personal growth)
2. Do you think that you will be able to use the skills that you’ve learnt in your term as mentor in the workplace one day as a professional and how? (employability skills)

These responses should ideally be analysed scientifically for evidence of growth in terms of wellness factors, graduate attributes and employability skills within a qualitative and mixed methods research study. Preliminary work has been done in this regard with the aid of an excellent software service called Dedoose. Such a study requires a large scale effort and due to manpower shortages a comprehensive study has not yet been undertaken. It appears, however, that mentors have acquired a wide range of wellness skills during their terms as mentors. Figure 18 list some of these skills. This seems to confirm that BeWell may be used as a powerful vehicle to develop certain graduate attributes and employability skills for the workplace (if we assume that there is a close relationship between wellness skills and graduate attributes).

Figure 18: Areas in which mentors indicated they have grown.
The following selection of quotations, directly taken from the reflections of mentors, underline the potential of the mentoring process (the BeWell system) to make serious contributions to the personal development of mentors and mentees.

Note: English is the second or third language of many of our students. All the quotations are given exactly as they were submitted – no editing was done.

6.3.1. Quotations regarding Wellness and Personal Growth

“I think I have grown in the way of developing new skills. I have learnt time management, crisis management and how to fit into a team with all its responsibilities and commitments. I have also grown in confidence when speaking to new people, and have become much better at facilitating group discussions and activities. Being a mentor has also given me a wonderful feeling of self-worth and fulfillment. Helping the first years is very gratifying and they are always very appreciative. I have formed close relationships with a number of them, and this in turn has increased my own social capital. I have made peace with the fact that not all my mentees need me equally, making myself available as they require. I feel that as the year progresses I will continue to increase the new skills I have learnt as well as develop more new ones. I thoroughly enjoy being a mentor and am eager to continue holding sessions and making sure that my mentees are flourishing.”

“The experience until this far is really amazing. I love seeing the growth in the lives of the first years. I can almost not believe the exponential jump they have taken in such a short time. I feel that I have grown tremendously the past couple of months, not just as being a mentor to the first years, but a friend as well. I am now able to solve problems in a very short period of time and use my knowledge of wellness to assist the first years in their academic success. I have a deeper understanding of the integration of the components of wellness and I can confidently say that the wellness program has drastically impacted my own life.”

“My favourite aspect of being a mentor is the relationship I have built with each mentee and knowing that I had assisted in making their transition from High School into University life a little less daunting and scary. It has been personally fulfilling to know that I’ve contributed to someone’s growth and development and assisted in their adaptation to a new academic environment. Seeing my mentees succeed this year will be a reward in itself. A mentoring relationship is one of mutual trust and respect and to lead by example. Becoming a mentor has enriched my life in the following ways: Leadership skills - It has helped me develop my ability to motivate and encourage others and help each mentee build self-confidence. Communication skills - Because my mentees have not necessarily come from the same backgrounds this has forced me to find a way to communicate more effectively and be a source for information and encouragement. Personal satisfaction - As a mentor, it provides great satisfaction to be there to help, encourage, nurture, and provide support and guidance to the First Year students as we have already been there, done that and know how overwhelming First Year can be.”

“My experience as mentor is definitely one of very big growth. I have learnt a lot about people and their different needs and personalities. I have also in this process learnt a lot about myself. I have learnt that I definitely love people and that I love being there for people and making a difference. I have also learnt how to handle stress, how to explain to other people how to handle stress, how to live a more balanced life, how to explain to other people how to live a more balanced life, how to
manage my time and how to explain to other people how they could try and spend their time more effectively. I have learnt how to handle conflict situations, and how to handle situations that I would otherwise like to ignore. I have definitely learnt a lot about myself and so far it has been a wonderful experience.”

“As a mentor, I have been exposed to many new experiences. Having had to guide first years has taught me a lot with regard to how people experience the same things differently and attach value to different experiences. This reminded me that one cannot always run on assumptions, saying that due to something having been a good experience for most, therefore it was a good experience for everyone. Everybody has a history and attached emotions that one cannot always see or take notice of. Therefore one has to always try and take this into account and pay special attention to these kind of things. It is very difficult to accommodate everybody and one will not always achieve this. That is a fact. The only thing one can do is try not to be too insensitive about any possible insecurities someone else could have.”

“This semester I felt I grew as a mentor in that I have become more intentional in my actions and am a better listener. Sometimes my mentees didn't need advice, they just wanted a hug, a shoulder to cry on, someone to listen to their sorrow or share their joy. I realized how important it is to be aware that each person's background is unique and has a massive impact on how they experience the world. It took humility and to put myself in a mentee’s shoes and to see her experiences through her eyes. My group of mentees came equipped with everything inside of them that they needed to cope with university, but sometimes they just needed someone to believe in them, give them confidence and to help foster those things and bring them out. I also came to find that it sometimes only takes a small amount of effort and intentionality to make somebody feel valued and secure. The first semester in the first year of university is a very vulnerable period of firsts and it was a privilege for me to encourage a few girls through this time.”

“The first semester is nearly over and it’s been a very fulfilling experience. I’ve learned more about myself as a mentor than I have at any stage in my life. I’ve learned compassion and friendship and teamwork and leadership. I was nervous when I started. I mean who wouldn't be? The thought of being responsible for 8 girls was a bit daunting at first. You can’t exactly make mistakes with other people’s lives. I soon realized that it wasn’t about being the perfect mentor who sits there and listens to my mentees when they have problems, but rather about taking the initiative and getting to know people. It’s about connecting with people so that they are comfortable to come to you in the first place. And showing them your mistakes so they don’t have to make them. And finding what inhibits their growth as a fully-fledged Stellenbosch varsity student and taking the right measures to ensure that they bloom. And watching someone come into contact with their adulthood no matter how they do it. It’s about being there. And crying with them. And laughing with them. And advising them. And encouraging them. I’m fortunate to have the opportunity to experience all of it. It hasn’t always been easy, but it has always been a lesson and a stepping stone. Thankfully enough, I have an amazing team of mentors working with me and that has been another experience I wouldn’t trade the world for. I have another semester to make a difference and I can’t wait. Hopefully I have made as much a change in my mentees’ lives as they have made in mine.”

“I grew as a mentor by:-feeling more comfortable to speak in a group as a leader, -improving my own wellness through the wellness mentor sessions,-improving my leadership skills-making a difference.
in my mentees lives (hopefully)-offering better advice and helping more. The experience of being a mentor so far was nothing I could imagine when I had the thought of applying to be one. I learned so much about myself and my mentees and enjoying every minute of it. They made a positive difference in my life so far and I know it will just get better and better and I am looking forward to what is yet to come.”

“As a mentor I have learnt so much about myself and so much from others just by merely being open to new ideas and beliefs. Being able to interact with different people from different backgrounds provided me with so much more knowledge. When the mentors would meet for discussion about certain topics it was good to debate the way some things should be handled and to my surprise it was enlightening to lose a debate because it allowed me to be open to new ideas. Being in the position of being older than my mentees I was able to help and guide them with so many aspects of being in university. Better yet, they were able to help me because i grow along with them by following the wellness wheel. I was never really interested in fulfilling all the aspects of the wellness wheel, but researching and presenting each spoke of the wheel quickly showed me that is was essential to live a balanced life. Overall the experience has been enriching and has allowed me use these skills in order to be a lifelong mentor.”

“The experience has taught me an immense amount about dealing with people and building relationships. I have also become very aware of how much more I need to have mentors in my life to enable and empower me to mentor those that have been assigned to me, or even the people for whom I am not directly responsible for. Being a mentor has really opened my eyes to see the incredible need that exist amongst individuals in a new environment. So many people have so much to contribute to the lives of those around them, but they are not prepared to invest time into even one or two relationships. Being a mentor is not a position, it is not about how old you are and it is certainly not about how clever you are. It has to do with a attitude of willingness to share your insights and experiences with those around you so they can learn and grow from it.”

6.3.2. Quotations regarding Employability Skills

“Yes, I believe that the skills I have obtained will indeed facilitate professionalism in the workplace. Skills such as effective communication, listening skills and being able to act as a mediator between parties of different opinions are all things I pride myself in. Being a mentor also entails being a role model as one must guide others, but at the same time follow their own advice in their daily lives. Therefore, being a mentor, as well as a role model, can be largely associated with being a good leader - this is an important quality to have in the workplace. Lastly, my mentees have helped me so much to realize things about myself that I had yet to discover. This being said, we should not feel superior to anybody, and even while we teach others, we can learn from them too. Relating this to the workplace is very important, because we should not be ignorant or blind to the views of our fellow colleagues, regardless of their position.”

“Yes certainly. We learn every day. As a mentor, and thus a leader, it was wrong for me to initially assume that respect comes with power (in the broadest sense of the word). I very soon learned that respect, despite your title, is in fact a hard earned trait and I quickly had to learn to do so in order to gain trust and stability in my relationship with my mentees. More importantly, I then had to convey this lesson I learned to them, teaching them, so to speak, hopefully encouraging them to refrain
from making the same mistake I did. This lesson is well learned and hit home something I will never forget, and I will certainly use this skill set in the near future regarding my workplace.”

“Yes, I will be able to apply the skills that I have learned during my mentor term in the workplace one day. Being a mentor really helped me to work better with people. To be able to bring people together and to meet them on a one-on-one basis. I also learned that it is important to listen to what others have to say before you make decisions. I can say that I have learned to be a democratic leader who allows people to take part in key decision making activities. I have also learned to be patient with people. Sometimes my mentees would take their time to respond to my messages, or they would not reply at all. This helped me to change my approach and not use the same approach every time. Wellness is something that will also be very important in the workplace. I will have to maintain a balanced lifestyle in terms of physical, social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, career and psychological wellness when I am working one day. My term as a mentor helped me to realise the importance of these different types of wellness, and I am sure that all of them will be beneficial to me in the workplace one day.”

“Yes, I definitely feel like I will be able to use the skills learnt in my term as mentor in the workplace. Through the mentor program I learnt to work with various individuals with different personalities and I learnt to guide them towards a common goal in a manner that made all parties feel appreciated and respected. I also learnt to facilitate conversations that weren't always fun to have, but that were necessary. I've also grown a lot as an individual and this personal growth will definitely help me to always aspire for greater things, and being a mentor gave me the confidence I often lacked to have my voice heard.”

“By being a mentor I learnt how to work with a group of people on an intimate level. I was exposed to a group of girls with extremely different personalities and varying needs. I learnt how to listen to understand, rather than just to listen to respond. I learnt how to be patient when it came to understanding their complaints. I learnt how to manage my time better for some of the girls required an hour or 2 out of my day to chat about how they were feeling. Sometimes giving your time to someone is one of the most difficult things to do, but the most rewarding, because you can really impact their decisions. The most important skill I learnt was how to get the girls to open up and really discuss all aspects of their well-being. I feel these skills are vital in the work place and just to apply to all people in general. One needs to be able to work with people, listen and respond appropriately. The workplace will constantly expose you to many personalities, each one demanding something else from you and being able to apply yourself appropriately can differentiate you in the workplace.”

“Definitely. I can already use my newly acquired wellness knowledge to my advantage. By balancing the different facets of my life I can achieve maximum productivity. This is the second year that I'm doing this and I'm still learning more and more skills with every wellness activity. One also learns valuable leadership and social skills. It is something special to have another person's wellness as your responsibility.”

“Absolutely!! Actually last night as I was having an individual mentor mentee session and my mentee was sitting opposite my desk I thought in the beginning as I was asking these open ended questions: Oh wait, this feels like a medical consult history taking. So my mentor role has given me real life experience in interacting with people on a very deep and personal level whilst still maintaining a
professional element and maintaining a very intentional approach with the conversations we have. Also it has exposed me to the challenge of getting someone to trust and open up to you - a skill very crucial in my future line of work. I believe my mentees were an incredibly diverse set of individuals - not just demographically - but with their personalities as well. Each one responded differently to different approaches of conversation. This taught me to interact with people in such a way that specifically resonates with their way of interacting. I've also learned to find the beauty of working with and interacting with younger minds - a discovery I believe will be valuable as I carry on as a senior in my field.”

“The skills that I learned throughout my mentor term will definitely equip me in my profession. I'm currently studying BTH Youth Work and working with diverse individuals during a time where they might feel at their most vulnerable. It has really helped me to be more sympathetic and to be more helpful. I also learned that communication is key and that people can feel when you do not want to spend time with them. I also learned how to plan and execute events that help people in my mentee group grow as persona. Being a mentor helped me develop my leadership skills more, increased my circle of friends (since my mentees became my friends) and it also helped me learn how to develop strategies on dealing with my personal life, my academic life and my mentor/mentee life. It also helped me to listen actively and engage with other peoples lives. This will help me immensely when I have to help young adults as a youth worker.”

“As a post-graduate student I am now planning on entering a professional career and I believe my two terms served as mentor will help me in the following ways: 1. It has made me a more self-confident person. Given the responsibility and authority that go in hand with being a mentor I have grown as a person. I learnt how to work with people better and it has definitely improved my communication skills. 2. It has taught me how to deal with conflict. Dealing with the issues and problems brought to me by my mentees I attained valuable skills regarding the calm resolution of conflict situations. 3. The BeWell program in particular has once again highlighted to me the importance of my personal well-being and in learning all these things to my mentees I started to incorporate it into my personal life as well. The physical aspect of wellness was emphasized to me and made a big difference in my daily routine.”

“Being a mentor encompasses the traits of being a leader which entails listening; guiding and continuously growing from the experiences you have faced and the experiences you have helped others through. At times you get frustrated and lose sight of the task at hand, but then remember that there are people that look to you for guidance. This will definitely help me as an individual in the workplace one day. I have learnt patience, time management and also how to grow and adapt different leadership traits for differing situations at hand. I have learnt to adapt when plans fall through and look for alternative solutions in order to get things back on track again. Being a mentor has taught me to look for creative solutions to ordinary problems, and that sometimes looking outside of the box helps as tunnel vision can hamper your growth as an individual. I have also been able to interact with my fellow mentors as a group and have learned to work together with people that are not the same as me and who share different outlooks. I have learnt valuable lessons from them and applied them in situations I have been in. The workplace is exactly like group work - everyone has to pull together to achieve a common goal and I believe I have the expertise to deal with this.”
“Yes I do think so. The management of time and team management I have learned from being head mentor is ultimately invaluable. It will be an asset for me throughout my life as a leader. I will be able to manage myself and other people which are two trademarks of any successful person/leader. I have also developed intrapersonal and further developed my interpersonal skills during my time as head mentor and having my own mentee group. The training I have gone through will also help me to excel in various ways, whether it be uplifting others, or simply motivating myself to succeed. As a future educator the skills to help others in as many spheres as possible will be an essential tool in my career.”

“Yes. I learnt how to work with different people from different backgrounds and to be able to put myself in their shoes and understand why they tackle certain things in such a way. A lot of the decisions or choices and our values have a lot to do with our background - so as a mentor I had to be able to understand as well as respect other people’s opinions. In the workplace you will be around a lot of diverse individuals so knowing how to approach and respect other people is of vital importance. I also learned self-sacrifice - as a mentor sometimes you have to put on hold personal things for the greater good of your mentees, or even the mentor body. In the workplace this may be the case when a project or group assignment is due and having experienced it now it will make it a lot easier in the future.”

6.3.3. Development of Graduate Attributes

Stellenbosch University has set herself the goal of delivering graduates with the graduate attributes depicted in figure 19 below. The above quoted reflections were selected from the feedback of the approximately 1200 mentors that served during 2014 and 2015. We believe that they, together with the others (the majority!) not quoted here, and the skills represented in figure 18 (how mentors have grown) leave enough clues to the reader to suspect that they are closely related to the graduate attributes the university wants to develop in her graduates. A formal qualitative and mixed methods research study will, however, have to be undertaken to confirm this suspicion. For now the best we can do is to hypothesize that the BeWell mentoring system may be recommended as a vehicle to develop the university’s graduate attributes.
7. Next Steps

7.1. A New Framework and New Workshops

We are in the process of finalising a new framework for the future. Our dream is to expand the digital or e-component of BeWell (specifically the e-workshop and multimedia resources) and make it available to all our students. This will enable all our students to benefit from the latest research on potential optimisation and will add further value to the development of graduate attributes. First-year students will therefore still be served by both the peer mentoring system and its digital developmental component, as is currently the case within the BeWell mentoring project, but senior students will now also have access to the expanded version of BeWell’s digital developmental component.

A conceptual framework for the development of evidence-based, blended learning, individualised and gamified mental skills training and intervention programmes for optimal performance, experience and development was consequently created to complement the current BeWell model. This framework makes provision for e-products, e-coaching- and membership services, as well as traditional workshops with a web tracking component (a new service that will serve all students).

The framework’s products/services/interventions will be implementations of evidence-based techniques and programmes from the fields of wellness, positive psychology and sport psychology. E-Workshops will be the basic building block of all programmes, but a blended approach will complement the digital component with face-to-face workshops. Each workshop will consist of four sections: Grok (understand), gauge (assess), grow (journal activities/exercises are central) and a tracking component. Figure 20 illustrates this new format.

![Figure 20: The Grok-Gauge-Grow-Track Approach](image)

Figure 21 lists some of the topics that will be the focus of these new blended workshops. The mind map lists 22 positive psychological factors that affect academic performance (also see “Why
Wellness?” in section 2). Each factor is backed up by scientific findings. Blended Grok-Gauge-Grow-Track workshops will be developed to address each of these factors. The BeWell Mentor Wellness project at Stellenbosch University already utilized the e-workshop versions on wellness, and a grit and a growth mindset during 2015. Experimental face-to-face workshops are also already been conducted on both these topics (with high performance sport athletes and within one residence).

Figure 21: New topics for blended workshops (a selection).

Users in the new framework will be supported by their own individualised websites (as in BeWell) with assessments, ebooks, audiobooks, e-workshops, tracking tools and activity records, profile pages and personalised leaderboards (gamification).

The tracking of all activities within this new framework allows for big data analysis and for quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research studies to determine whether the goals of optimising performance, experience and development were met.

7.2. More Thoughts, and Steps to Take...

Longer term objectives include:

- Expand the range of workshop topics further by including more wellness, happiness and positive psychology based workshops and interventions;
- Adapt our framework to support the newly proposed First Year Academy curriculum (our version of the first-year experience) – integrate it with the current BeWell project;
- Cater for wider audiences in the educational sector and include sport and organizations as new target groups – follow an entrepreneurial approach; and
- Fully utilise all our tracking data to conduct big data analysis and quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research studies to determine whether the goals of optimising performance, experience and development were met in all the application areas.
Appendix 1: The BeWell Mentor Wellness Project Team

The following people were part of the original team (2012) that developed the concept (including the design of the wellness cards (with Dr Nico Simpson’s assistance)), launched version 1 of BeWell in 2013, created version 2 in 2014 and version 3 in 2015, and managed the project:

1. Dr Ludolph Botha, Senior Director: Student Affairs
2. Prof Charl Cilliers, Director: Centre for Student Counselling and Development (retired at the end of 2014)
3. Dr Munita Dunn, Director: Centre for Student Counselling and Development (since 2015)
4. Dr Alten du Plessis, Deputy Director: Tracking and Development, Centre for Institutional Research
5. Pieter Kloppers, Director: Centre for Student Structures and Communities
6. Elmien Strauss, Head: Unit for Academic Counselling and Development

The success and growth of this project are the result of a huge team effort – most probably one of the largest interventions in the world that has the focus of simultaneously facilitating optimum academic performance and an increase in wellness levels of a student population. More than 1500 mentors and head mentors assisted approximately 10 000 first-year students since 2013 when version 1 of BeWell was launched.

The crucial role of our seven ResEd Coordinators is also acknowledged: Benita van Zyl (amaMaties), Annette du Plessis (Rubix), Johan Groenewald (Tygerberg), Noel Bekkers (Validus), Mariëtha Lemmer (Vicmeyr), Marianne de Villiers (Victoria) and Riana Engelbrecht (Wimbledon).

Appendix 2: Wellness Needs of First-Year Students

The figure below shows specific results of Stellenbosch University’s Alpha Baseline Questionnaire (a profiling questionnaire completed by new first-year students at the beginning of the academic year) for 2002 to 2014: Large percentages of first-year students indicate that they will benefit from additional help in areas related to various wellness dimensions.
Appendix 3: The Wellness Cards

Bevorder sukses deur welwees
Enhance success through wellness

Apply LLL to Wellness

Wellness means to be healthy, happy and well-adjusted in all facets of your life. These facets include your physical, emotional, intellectual, career, social and spiritual wellness. When you take responsibility for your own wellness, you increase your chances of success also in your studies and in your career.

Drie kernbeginsels
Three core principles

Ek luister na jou
I listen to you

Ek leer by jou
I learn from you

Jy kies hoe jy wil leef
You choose how you want to live
Front of Card 1

**Fisiese Welwees**
Fisiese welwees beteken om jou liggaam goed op te pas. Dit sluit in om ’n veilige blyplek te hê, om genoeg en gesond te eet en te drink, om genoeg oefening te kry en om weg te bly van dinge wat jou gesondheid kan benadeel.

Physical wellness means looking after your body. That includes having a safe place to live, having enough to eat and choosing healthy food and drink, doing enough exercise and avoiding things that are harmful to your body.

Back of Card 1

**Moontlike vrae/Possible Questions**

1) Hoe voel jy oor jou fisiese welwees? Watter aspekte van hierdie welwees sou jy wil verbeter?
   How do you feel about your physical wellness? Which aspects would you like to improve?

2) Wat dink jy kan jy doen om jou gesondheid te verbeter? Kan jy aan een ding dink? Wil jy meer inligting hieroor hé?
   What do you think you could do to improve your health? Can you think of one thing? Would you like more information about it?

3) Dink jy dis nodig om jou lewenstyl aan te pas om jou fisiese welwees te verbeter?
   Do you think you need to adjust your lifestyle to improve your physical wellness?
   Hoe dink jy kan jy dit doen? Wanneer wil jy hiermee begin?
   How would you think you can do this? When would you like to start?
Front of Card 2

Emosionele Welwees

Emosionele welwees is om goed oor jouself te voel en ‘n positiewe selfbeeld te hê. Dit is om bewus te wees van jou eie emosies en om dit te kan uitdruk. Emosionele welwees beteken jy kan stres, emosionele uitdagings en verwagtinge beter hanteer en jy aanvaar verantwoordelikeheid vir hoe jy voel.

Emotional wellness is about feeling good about yourself and having positive self-esteem. It’s about being aware of your emotions and being able to express them. Emotional wellness is about dealing with stress, expectations and emotional challenges more effectively and taking responsibility for your feelings.

Back of Card 2

Moontlike vrae/Possible Questions

1) Is daar enige sterk positiewe emosies wat jy meer gereeld sou wou voel? Hoekom hierdie emosies? Wat kan jy doen om meer gereeld so te voel? Are there any strong positive emotions that you would like to experience more often? Why these emotions? What can you do to experience these more often?

2) Erfvaar jy soms enige negatiewe emosies? Is daar ‘n negatiewe emosie wat jy meer gereeld ervaar? Wat dink jy veroorsaak hierdie negatiewe emosie? Hoe kan jy dit op ‘n positiewe manier hanteer? Do you sometimes experience any negative emotions? Is there a particular negative emotion that you experience more regularly? What do you think causes this emotion? How can you deal with it in a positive way?

3) Watter advies sou jy jou vriende gee om hulle te help om meer positief te voel? What advice would you give your friends to help them feel more positive?
Intellektuele Welwees

Intellektuele welwees gaan oor die gebruik van jou verstand. Jy gebruik jou verstand om lewenslesse te leer en om nuwe kennis op te doen. Jou intellektuele welwees gee jou ook die vermoë om suksesvol te studeer en so jou intellektuele potensiaal te ontsluit.

Intellectual wellness means using your intellect. You use your intellect to learn from life and to acquire new knowledge. Your intellectual wellness also enables you to study successfully. This can lead you to realise your intellectual potential.

Moontlike vrae/Possible Questions

1) Waarom is dit belangrik dat jy vertroue het in jou eie intellektuele vermoë?
   Why is it important that you have confidence in your own intellectual abilities?

2) Dink jy daar is van jou intellektuele vaardighede wat jy verder behoort te ontwikkel? Hoe sou jy dit kon ontwikkel?
   Do you think there are any of your intellectual skills that you should develop further? How could you develop them?

3) Dink jy self-discipline speel 'n belangrike rol in die ontwikkeling van jou intellektuele welwees?
   Watter aspekte van jou self-discipline sou jy wou verbeter sodat jy jou intellektuele welwees kan bevorder?
   Do you think self-discipline plays an important role in the development of your intellectual wellness? Which aspects of your self-discipline would you like to improve in order to increase your intellectual wellness?
Beroepswelwees

Vir studente behels beroepswelwees om jou voor te berei vir jou toekoms sodat jy eendag gelukkig kan wees in jou loopbaan. Dit beteken dat jy dan kan doen wat jy graag wil en wat by jou en jou talente pas. Jy gaan eendag moet help skep aan gesonde omstandighede vir welwees in jou werk.

For a student career wellness is about preparing yourself for your future so that you can one day be happy in your profession. This means that you will then be able to do what you enjoy and it will suit you and your capabilities. One day you will also have to help create healthy conditions for wellness at your work place.

Moontlike vrae/Possible Questions

1) Hoekom het jy hierdie graadprogram gekies en wat wil jy eendag daarmee bereik?
Why did you choose this degree programme and what would you like to achieve with your degree one day?

2) Is daar iets wat jy nou al kan doen om te help verseker dat jy eendag gelukkig in jou werk sal wees?
Is there anything that you can do now to make sure that you will be happy in your work one day?

3) Gesels oor die vrae in die driehoek.
Discuss the questions in the triangle.
Front of Card 5

Sosiale Welwees

Sosiale welwees is om gesonde verhoudings met jouself én met andere te hê – jou familie en jou vriende en ook die breër gemeenskap. Dit is om saam te kuier en tyd te hê vir pret, om met ander saam te werk sodat jy positief kan bydra tot jou eie groep en die gemeenskap.

Social wellness is about having healthy relationships with yourself and those around you – your family and your friends, and also the wider community. It’s about being together and having time for fun, working as a team to contribute positively towards your own group and the community.

Back of Card 5

Moontlike vrae/Possible Questions

1) Dink jy gesonde verhoudings met die mense rondom jou is belangrik vir jou eie ontwikkeling? Dink jy dit beïnvloed ook jou sukses as ‘n student?
   Do you think healthy relationships with those around you are important for your own development? Do you think it also impacts on your success as a student?

2) As jy vir ‘n vriend(in) wat eensaam voel op kampus moet advies gee, wat sal dit wees?
   If you were to give advice to a friend who is lonely on campus, what would the advice be?

3) Wat dink jy is die beste manier om verhoudings wat skeef geloop het, te herstel?
   What do you think is the best way to restore strained relationships?

4) Hoe kan jy sosiale media soos Facebook en Twitter op ‘n positiewe manier gebruik om jou sosiale welwees te verbeter?
   How can you use social media such as Facebook or Twitter positively to improve your social wellness?
Spirituele Welwees

Spirituele welwees is om geestelik geanker te wees en om betekenis en ’n duidelike doelwit in jou lewe te hê. Dit beteken dat jy tyd maak vir geestelike aktiwiteite en/of dinge wat jou as mens laat groei – bv tyd vir gebed, vir sang, vir meditasie, vir nadenke, vir kerk en vir geloofsgebaseerde werk.

Spiritual wellness is about being connected spiritually and having meaning and purpose in your life. It’s about making time for spiritual activities and/or things that make you grow as a human being – e.g. time for praying, for singing, for meditating, for reflecting, for going to church and for doing faith based work.

Moontlike vrae/Possible Questions

1) Wat is die belangrikste waardes wat vir jou rigting gee in jou lewe? Hoekom is juis hulle vir jou so belangrik?
Which are the most important values that guide your life? Why specifically these values?

2) Is daar ander waardes wat jy graag ook deel van jou geestelike welwees wil maak? Hoekom juis hulle en hoe dink jy kan jy hierdie waardes ontwikkel?
Are there other values that you would like to add to your spiritual wellness? Why these values and how do you think you can develop them?

3) Wat is jou denke oor die universele waardes wat op hierdie kaart verskyn?
What are your thoughts on the universal values on this card?

4) Vul die vraelys by www.viame.org in en gesels dan met mekaar oor wat jy van jouself geleer het. Complete the questionnaire at www.viame.org and then share what you have learnt about yourself.
Appendix 4: Resources

A. Websites, Demonstration Videos and Research on Academic Achievement

2. The personal wellness website of a typical BeWell mentor – demonstration site. Available at http://www0.sun.ac.za/bewell/realdemo/.
11. Demonstration video: How to present the first LLL Wellness mentoring session. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VfYT4xMhelQ.
13. The Science behind FlourishWell4Life @ School & University (wellness and positive psychological factors that impact on academic performance). Available at http://www.flourishwell4life.com/ppfactors/.

B. Downloadable User Manuals


C. Publications and Conference Presentations

A total of 17 presentations related to the BeWell project was made at national and international conferences in South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Russia, Netherlands, Spain, Hungary, Switzerland and Greece. A few peer reviewed publications were also produced. They are all listed below, in chronological order (2011-2015).


Appendix 5 : How the Gamification of a Mentoring System Motivates University Students to Engage in Well-being Enhancing Activities

The abstract of Dr Alten du Plessis' presentation at the Fourth World Congress on Positive Psychology (25-28 June 2015 in Orlando, USA) with the title "How the Gamification of a Mentoring System Motivates University Students to Engage in Well-being Enhancing Activities" appears below. The slides of the presentation follows thereafter. Detailed notes are provided for each slide.

Abstract: At first-year level our university utilises 560 trained mentors to guide approximately 5000 first-year students during their first six to nine months at university. This psycho-social support aims to enhance wellness, to develop positive psychological factors that affect academic achievement and to create a "flourishing" campus culture.

Wellness cards are used by mentors during 10 to 12 one hour sessions with their mentees to facilitate growth and positive discussions. All mentors and mentees are also supported by their own individualized and secure wellness websites with assessments, ebooks, audiobooks, e-workshops, tracking tools for card sessions, journals, profile pages and personalised leaderboards. Online well-being enhancing activities currently include e-workshops on wellness, grit and growth mindsets, and a gratitude and happiness journal.

Gamification principles are integrated within the individualized websites of students to enhance engagement, competition and motivation. Ten primary gamification mechanics (fast feedback, transparency, goals, badges, leveling up, onboarding, competition, collaboration, community and points) were implemented with the aim of enhancing five key intrinsic motivators (autonomy, mastery, purpose, progress and social interaction).

A mixed methods research project evaluation provides evidence of huge increases in student engagement in well-being enhancing activities (partly due to gamification), academic performance gains and positive student development growth.

1. Opening Slide

Fourth World Congress on Positive Psychology, Orlando, United States of America, 25-28 June 2015

How the Gamification of a Mentoring System Motivates University Students to Engage in Well-being Enhancing Activities

Dr Alten du Plessis
Stellenbosch University, South Africa
Good afternoon! My name is Alten du Plessis from Stellenbosch University in South Africa. I am honoured and excited to share with you today the BeWell story, and how the gamification of a campus-wide mentoring system contributed to the motivation of thousands of our students, both mentors (senior students) and mentees (first-year students), to engage in well-being enhancing activities.

2. The BeWell Story in a Nutshell

Stellenbosch University has a proud and long history (more than 40 years) of employing senior students, first as advisors, and later as mentors of first-year students. In 2013 our approach changed from a deficit model (how can I help you overcome your difficulties) to a wellness/well-being/strengths-based approach and we introduced wellness cards to facilitate positive discussions during mentoring sessions. All mentoring efforts were electronically recorded and managed and mentors and mentees were also supported by their own individualized wellness websites. The resulting system was called "BeWell". An evaluation at the end of 2013 indicated that the system had huge potential, but that some obstacles were negatively affecting engagement. The system was gamified at the beginning of 2014 since we learnt that the gamification of our system may lead to better engagement. A second evaluation at the end of 2014 was performed and the engagement numbers increased dramatically in comparison with 2013. At the beginning of 2015 a further improvement was introduced: The system was made 100% responsive. The result: Record engagement numbers in 2015! Let's go back to 2013 when the role of our mentors changed...

3. Changing Roles

Before 2013 our mentors played a "let's fixed it" role and tried to help our first-year students to move from -10 to 0 on the mental illness and well-being scales. In 2013 their role changed when the online BeWell system and our six wellness cards were implemented: They now had the role of facilitating growth and enhancing a flourishing campus culture.
4. 2013 Version of BeWell

At first-year level our university utilized approximately 500 trained mentors in 2013 to guide approximately 5000 first-year students during their first six to nine months at university. This psycho-social support aimed to enhance wellness, to develop positive psychological factors that affect academic achievement and to create a "flourishing" campus culture. Every mentor had between 7 and 10 mentees in his or her group. Students lived in men's, women's and mixed university residences as well as in a number of private wards (the so-called "day students").
5. Wellness Cards

Wellness cards are being used by mentors since 2013 during 10 to 12 one hour sessions with their mentees to facilitate growth and positive discussions. All six wellness dimensions are covered, namely the physical, emotional, intellectual, occupational, social and spiritual. All mentors and mentees are also supported by their own individualized and secure wellness websites with assessments, ebooks, audiobooks, e-workshops, tracking tools for card sessions, journals, profile pages and personalized leaderboards. Online well-being enhancing activities currently include e-workshops on wellness, grit and growth mindsets, and a gratitude and happiness journal.

6. Engagement During 2013
The 2013 results were promising, and are shown in this slide (point out one or two highlights during presentation - number of sessions, number of personalized sites and participation in online well-being enhancing activities, for example).

7. Huge Benefit: Development of Graduate Attributes

A mixed methods research project was launched at the end of 2013 to measure the impact of BeWell. Preliminary results indicated that the academic performance of residences that actively took part in BeWell improved and the qualitative feedback showed that BeWell had an additional benefit - it may be a powerful vehicle to advance the development of our university's graduate attributes (enquiring mind, engaged citizen, dynamic professional and a well-rounded individual).

8. Potential & Obstacles to Growth
The 2013 version of BeWell therefore showed tremendous potential, but there were also some obstacles that stood in the way of continued growth. They are listed in this slide.

9. Investigate the Role of Gamification

From our research we learnt that if we scientifically gamify our system we may address some of the engagement issues. We therefore studied gamification in detail, expanded our library with gamification-related titles, and learnt how to apply key gamification principles and mechanics to our BeWell Mentor Wellness project. The 2014 version of BeWell also had to be more mobile friendly.

10. Secret: Get Mentors & Mentees Intrinsically Motivated
The secret to engagement is to get both mentors and mentees intrinsically motivated, and luckily for us gamification offers effective ways to address all five intrinsic motivators, namely autonomy ("I control"), mastery ("I improve"), purpose ("I make a difference"), progress ("I achieve") and social interaction ("I connect with others"). We are big fans of Rahat Paharia's approach: He identified 10 key gamification mechanics that, if integrated within a gamified system, will lead to higher motivation and engagement. We therefore enthusiastically gave it a try.

11. Gamification Mechanics to Cultivate Motivation

Paharia's first 5 mechanisms are depicted in this slide. On the right hand side you will see the list of motivators that is addressed by each of the five mechanisms.

12. Gamification Mechanics to Cultivate Motivation (Continued)
Paharia’s last 5 mechanisms are depicted in this slide. On the right hand side you will see the list of motivators that is addressed by each of the five mechanisms. At the beginning of 2014 we launched a gamified version of BeWell (version 2.0) - we tried to integrate as much as possible of what we have learnt from our gamification studies and role models:) During the course of 2014 we eagerly monitored the system, and I am delighted to say, we were not disappointed! in fact, we were pleasantly surprised!

13. Engagement: Before and After Comparison

Our "before gamification" and "after gamification" engagement numbers are impressive, as can be seen on this slide: 2014 engagement approximately three times that of 2013 engagement! We are, however, not claiming that gamification is the only cause of this huge improvement, but it certainly played a part.

14. Session Comparison: Before and After Gamification

This slide indicates that wellness card sessions increased from 767 in 2013 to 1984 in 2014, a healthy increase of more than 250%! At the 2014 European Conference on Positive Psychology in Amsterdam we reported how wellness interventions on our campus for health sciences had positive effects on the wellness scores of their students, as well as their academic performance. We are eager to see if the same thing happened within our BeWell system and are therefore busy measuring this impact.
15. The Effect of the Competition Factor on Campus

One of the obstacles we mentioned earlier that we wanted to overcome was the weak engagement of our students in men's residences and students in private wards (called day students in America). By comparing the 2013 and 2014 leaderboards we can clearly see that this issue was addressed effectively (refer to tables if time allows), most probably because of gamification (men like competition) AND also because of strong leadership within our student communities. It is also interesting to notice that the competition factor did not really affect our women - their engagement is very consistent, and good, maybe because they are more conscientious?
16. The Enabling Effect of Gamification

For BeWell we want to determine whether a positive change in success rates occurred (performance), whether the students have grown in terms of specific graduate attributes, or another desired outcome like wellness (development) and whether they enjoyed the experience or not. Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research tools are utilized to measure these three outcomes.

The preliminary indicators are that BeWell did indeed have a positive impact on the academic performance of our first-year students, but we have also realized that this is a very complex issue with many angles (and many variables) to consider. Another very interesting exercise was to utilize all the available data in a mixed methods environment and to determine the best composition of a mentoring group. We chose to use Dedoose for all our qualitative and mixed methods research topics. As is also indicated in the diagram below, Dedoose was also used to determine if our mentors did in fact grow in terms of our university’s graduate attributes and wellness goals, and also to evaluate the positivity of their whole BeWell experience. The quantitative session ratings of both mentors and mentees were very high (above 80%) and the encouraging news is that mentees actually rated the sessions higher than the mentors themselves (very positive feedback for mentors!).

A meaningful application of data analytics within this environment is to identify “non-academic” predictors of academic performance, and to use this information to further improve the developmental resources offered within BeWell. The data from 2013 and 2014 confirmed what other researchers worldwide have found: Grit, a growth mindset and a well balanced wellness lifestyle are all important predictors of performance at university level, and more students should be encouraged to utilize the available BeWell resources on these topics.
17. Reasons for Better Engagement

What made the difference?

- Gamification certainly one factor
- Personalization - Individualized wellness websites improved from version 1.0 to current version 3.0
- Culture of logging established
- Mature system - 100% responsive in 2015
- Enthusiastic leadership
- Social Media communication

All the factors listed on this slide, namely gamification, personalization, a culture of logging, the maturity of the system, the mobile friendliness of the system, enthusiastic leadership within our structured student communities and the social media factor, definitely played a role in motivating our students within the BeWell system to engage in well-being enhancing activities. We are confident that the gamification did indeed play a significant role, also in support of the other factors. Whatever exactly made the difference, is not that important - the most important aspect from our viewpoint is the impact BeWell had on the performance, experience and development of both our mentors and mentees!

Thank you very much!
Contact Information

For more information about the project please contact Dr Alten du Plessis via email at sadp@sun.ac.za.