



PROGRESS REPORT: 2018—2020

PREPARED DECEMBER 2020

MINDFUL
UNIVERSITY
PROJECT

Start your journey today.

Free app, workshops, weekly drop-in sessions, retreats

rochester.edu/mindful

  @URMindfulUniversityProject



ABOUT THE MINDFUL UNIVERSITY PROJECT

The Mindful University Project is an interdisciplinary collaboration with a mission to empower our campus community to build a culture of mindful presence and compassion in order to allow our students to:

- improve mental well-being;
- boost academic flourishing;
- increase resiliency to stress; and
- reduce levels of anxiety and depression.

WHAT WE DO

Our goal is to create a safe and inclusive space for all students, staff and faculty to learn and engage in mindfulness through:

- introductory and advanced learn-to-meditate classes;
- drop-in meditation sittings;
- half-day silent retreats;
- contemplative practices including yoga, walking meditation, and compassion programs;
- faculty and staff training; and educational workshops.

WHY WE DO IT

We recognize the stress that our students are facing – the pressure to do more, to excel academically, and of course, to be ever better. Today's students face an endless sea of distraction and competing demands, which hinders their ability to be present in their everyday life, and often leads to mental health struggles such as anxiety and depression.

In fact, according to the 2017 National College Health Assessment:

- 64% of Rochester students have felt overwhelming anxiety;
- 90% felt overwhelmed by all they had to do; and
- the majority reported that anxiety and stress were negatively impacting their academic performance.

We want to offer a way for our students to not only manage their stress and calm the chatter of their minds, but also make their lives better in a way that is accessible and meaningful. However, our students can't make this change by themselves. They need to be immersed in a community which supports them at all levels.

From the faculty who teach them, and the academic advisers who support them, to the residence advisers who live with them, and the healthcare professionals who care for them – we are all in this together. Which is why our program is not just student-focused, but is one that spans across the entire community, so we all can live ever better lives.

OUR TEAM

Ralph Manchester, MD, Director of UHS
Jeffrey Runner, PhD, Dean of the College of AS&E

Amy McDonald, MS, CHWP
Associate Director of Health Promotion
Director, Mindful University Project

Zoe Black, HPO Program Coordinator
TBD, Health Educator

ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

Rani Bhagwat
Nancy Chin, PhD, MPH
Debra Corea, RYT
Melina Esse
Ed Feldman, MEd
Laura Gavigan, MEd, MS
Amber Graham
Katie Mott
Komekia Peterson
Lucinda Snyder, RYT
Kyle Trenshaw, PhD

KORU MINDFULNESS TEACHERS:

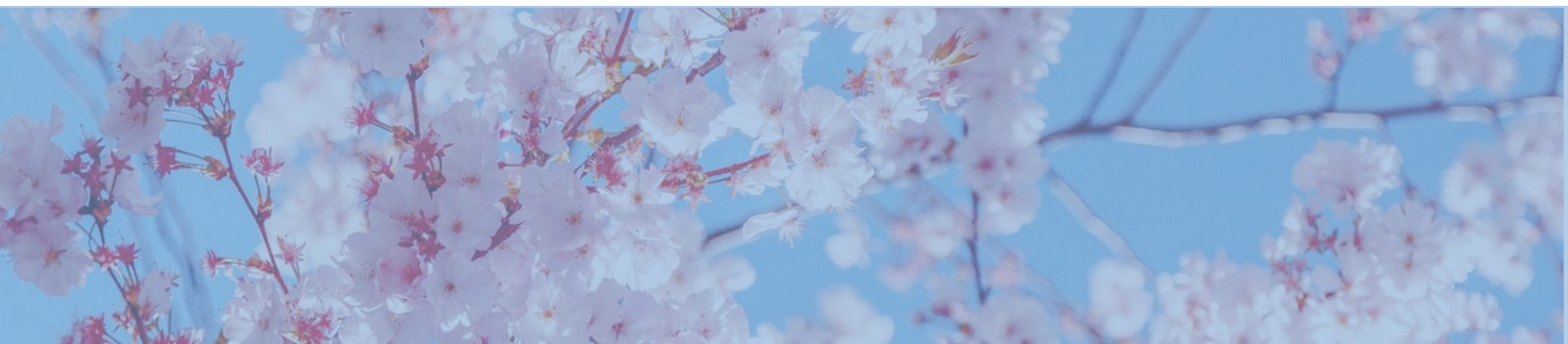
Debra Corea, RYT
Melina Esse, PhD
Laura Gavigan, MEd, MS
Whitney Gegg-Harrison, PhD
Amy McDonald, MS, CHWP
Amy Metzendorf, RYT
Felicia Reed-Watt, PhD
Meredith Smith
Lucinda Snyder, RYT
Kyle Trenshaw, PhD

STUDENT AMBASSADORS:

Jenny Lee, Co-Chair
Sylvia Lin, Co-Chair

Michelle Heckman
Brenda Hernandez
Chloe Jones
Rebecca Lena
Emma Michels

As of 1/1/2021



KORU MINDFULNESS

LEARN-TO-MEDITATE WORKSHOPS

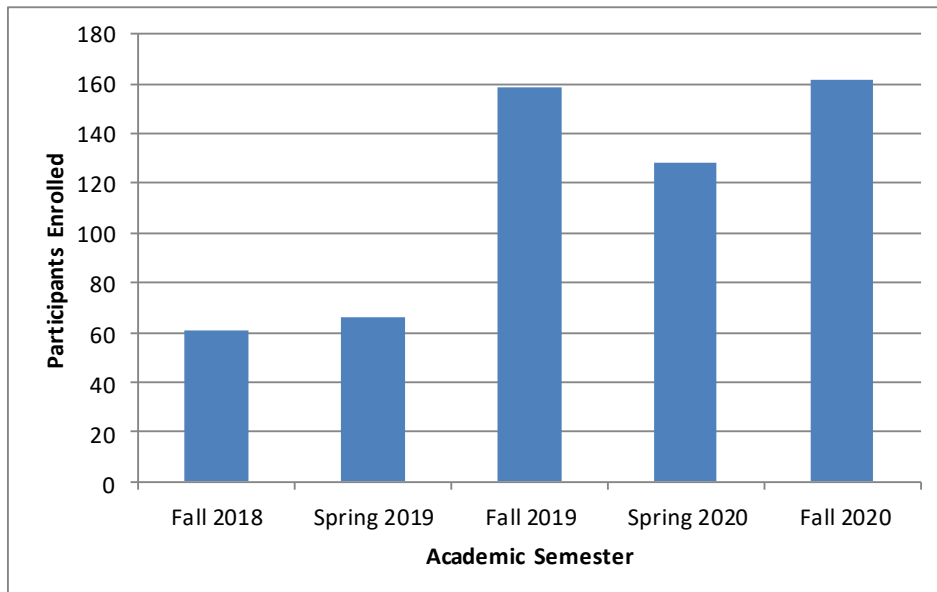
Koru Mindfulness is an evidence-based program specifically designed for college students, teaching mindfulness and meditation as a way to manage stress and reduce anxiety. Students learn skills that help calm and focus their mind, including breathing exercises, guided imagery, body scan, and lovingkindness practices.

KORU BASIC

An introduction to mindfulness and meditation. This class meets weekly over four weeks, and includes 75-minutes of instruction from a certified Koru Mindfulness teacher. Students will learn 2-3 new meditation techniques each week and will engage in a short daily practice consisting of meditation, mindful moments, and gratitude.

KORU 2.0

An “advanced” class for students who have completed Koru Basic or already have an established mindfulness meditation practice. This class meets weekly over four weeks, and includes 75-minutes of instruction from a certified Koru Mindfulness teacher. New meditation techniques will be taught in this course, including loving-kindness and seated yoga.



RAVE REVIEWS

“Learning how to meditate and be more mindful was one of the best things I’ve done as a student here.”

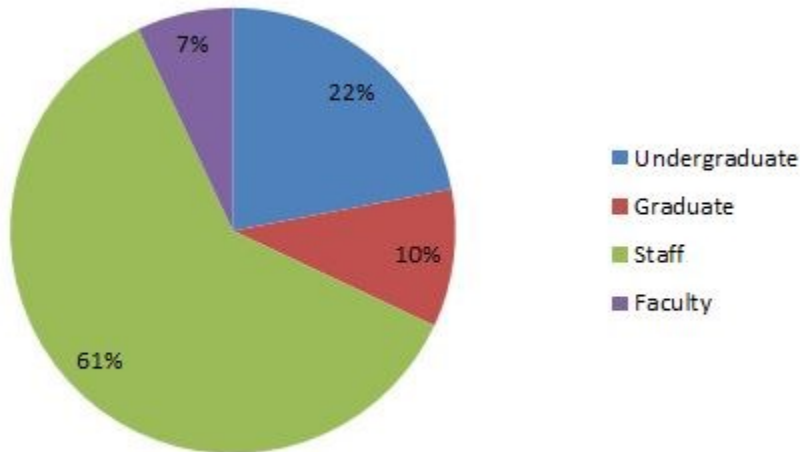
“I’m so thankful for the skills I learned in this class. It’s not only made me a better student, but it’s also made me a happier person!”

“Because of this class I am better able to manage my day-to-day stresses. My thoughts may still be bouncing all over the place at times, but I’m not as stressed out about it anymore.”

KORU MINDFULNESS

LEARN-TO-MEDITATE WORKSHOPS

ENROLLMENT BY STATUS:



WHY DID YOU TAKE THIS WORKSHOP?

"I feel paralyzed by my stress. My thoughts are usually jumping to the next thing & I'm having a hard time staying present."

"Not worrying so much about the future."

"To be less stressed!"

"To keep myself at peace and to stay calm in stressful situations"

"I want to be comfortable with doing nothing."

AS A RESULT OF THIS WORKSHOP :



DROP-IN MEDITATION OFFERINGS

Our drop-in meditation sittings (now virtual!) offer the breathing space students need to thrive throughout their week. They simply log in to Zoom, get comfy, and enjoy a peaceful break. As of Fall 2020, sessions are also streamed lived via Instagram.

VIRTUAL MEDITATION: FOR STUDENTS, BY STUDENTS

Jenny Lee, class of 2023 leads this virtual 20-minute meditation session each week. She holds space on Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. for an evening practice. Open to all undergraduate and graduate students.

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

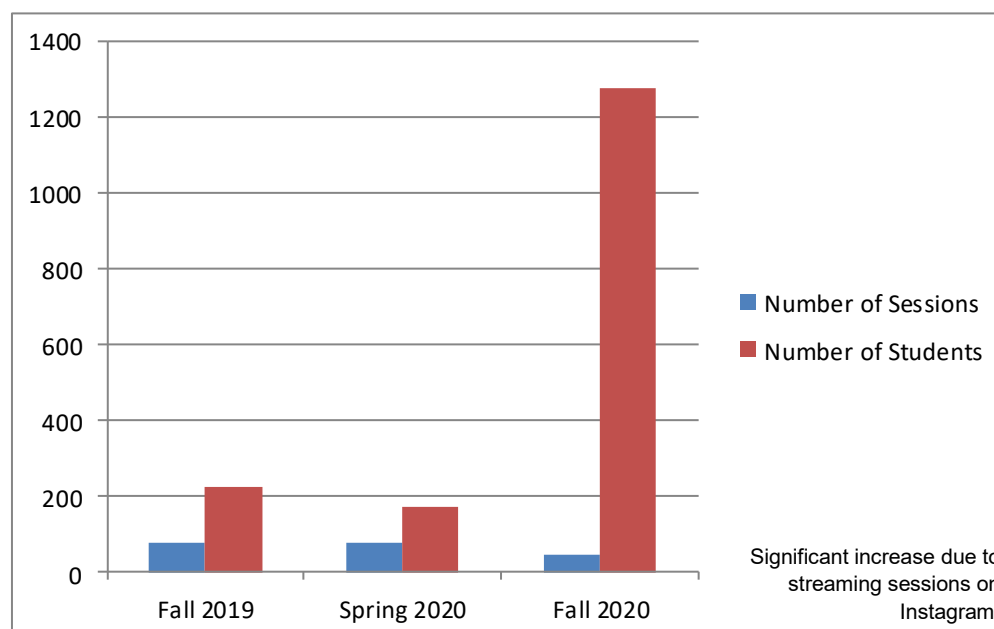
This meditation offering is by one of our certified Koru Mindfulness teachers, Kyle Trenshaw, on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. and Sundays at 8:00 p.m., Practices rotate each week and include formats such as body scans, breath awareness, and mindful movement. Offered in partnership with the Interfaith Chapel.

WELCOME TO CAMPUS MEDITATION

Drop-in meditation sessions are woven in to the orientation programming throughout first-year orientation week. These sessions include daybreak meditations, bedtime meditations, and a special night of reflection before classes begin.

MEDITATION ROOM

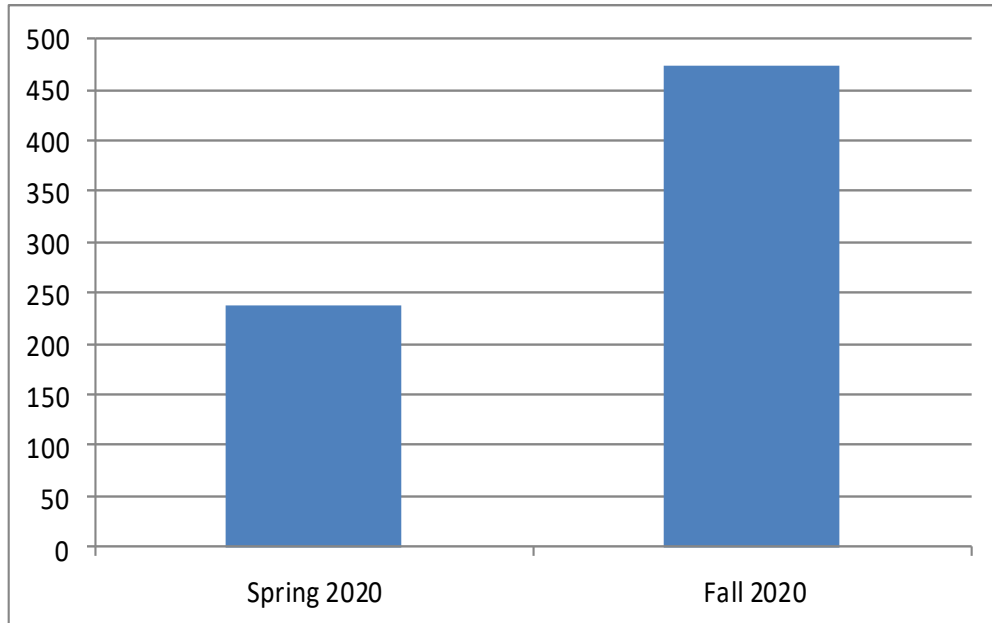
Use of the meditation room is promoted to all members of the River Campus community. It is located on the third floor of the Douglass Commons Building and is open for individual prayer and meditation use on Monday through Friday, from 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Additionally, a meditation room is available for Eastman School of Music Students in the Student Living Center.



YOGA OFFERINGS

Our drop-in yoga classes are appropriate for all levels, whether brand new to the practice or an experienced yogi. Classes are taught by a certified yoga instructor.

During the Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 semesters all yoga classes were taught virtually and streamed live via Instagram. Open to all students, faculty, and staff.



YOGA FOR ATHLETIC SUCCESS

This 4-week class uses the practice of yoga to teach mindfulness to student athletes with the goal to decrease stress, increase mindfulness and increase the ability to bounce back from unexpected stressors. Each session consists of a 15-minute meditation exercise, 30-minute yoga flow practice, and a 15-minute group reflection.

Participants are asked to practice the week's meditation exercise between classes. They are also asked to read short portions of the book *The Mindful Athlete: Secrets to Pure Performance* by George Mumford. Weekly reflection questions will be distributed and participants can choose to answer these questions in a journal to allow them to further synthesize the information and personalize it to their own situations and experiences. Classes will be taught by Lucinda Snyder, RYT.

Forty-two student athletes registered for the first offering of this course, offered in Fall 2020. Each participant received a yoga mat, a yoga block, and a copy of the required book. Evaluation data from this class is forthcoming.

MEDITATION RETREATS

Relax & Renew Retreats are a half-day, silent meditation retreat for students, faculty, and staff who are interested in a more immersive meditation experience. Held on the River Level of the Interfaith Chapel once each semester. Participants experience four hours of noble silence while engaging in a variety of contemplative practices including:

- Breath awareness meditation
- Gentle yoga
- Mindful walking
- Mindful eating
- Dharma talks

EVALUATION DATA:

- Approximately **80 people register** for each retreat.
- An **equal balance** of undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty / staff in attendance.
- **One-third** of participants were new to meditation

100% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they:

- Increased their knowledge about meditation & mindfulness.
- Learned at least one new skill for stress reduction.

90% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they:

- Increased their motivation to focus on stress reducing activities.

RETREAT TO RECONNECT

A day of meditation, mindfulness & yoga

On January 9th, 2021 the Mindful University Project will offer a day-long virtual retreat called Retreat to Reconnect. This retreat will help participants reconnect with themselves so they can live a life with more meaning, intention and authenticity in the New Year.

The day will include:

- Morning and evening yoga flow practices.
- Guided meditation sessions including breath awareness, body scan and loving-kindness.
- Building connection meditation.
- Community-building virtual lunch.
- Choice board with a variety of independent mindfulness activities to engage in throughout the day.

To date, almost 150 students, staff, faculty and alumni have registered to attend this retreat.

PROGRAMMING FOR EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC



TUNING THE MIND

MINDFULNESS & MUSIC

WHAT IT IS

A brief, one-minute guided mindfulness exercise performed during ensemble rehearsals immediately prior to the start of each new piece of music. Focus is placed on finding the breath, relaxing the body, and allowing the mind to settle.



STUDENT OPINION

Approximately 70% of students surveyed reported that they enjoyed the experience.



HOW IT HELPED

Find my breath. Settle my mind.
Connect with my body. Increase focus. Calm my nerves.



NEXT STEPS

Train conductors to lead brief meditation instruction during each ensemble rehearsal.

TESTIMONIALS

“

We make music on an empty canvas, directly after the chaos of people entering and sitting down. Mindfulness helps us transition. (Professor Neil Varon)

This brief meditation exercise gave us a clear starting point for rehearsal. It allowed us to move in to the flow of making music. (Zeke Fetrow, DMA Conducting)

”

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Free app, workshops, weekly drop-in sessions, retreats

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EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATIONS

The Mindful University Project team provides educational presentations and training for students, departments and schools at the University.

MINDFUL 101

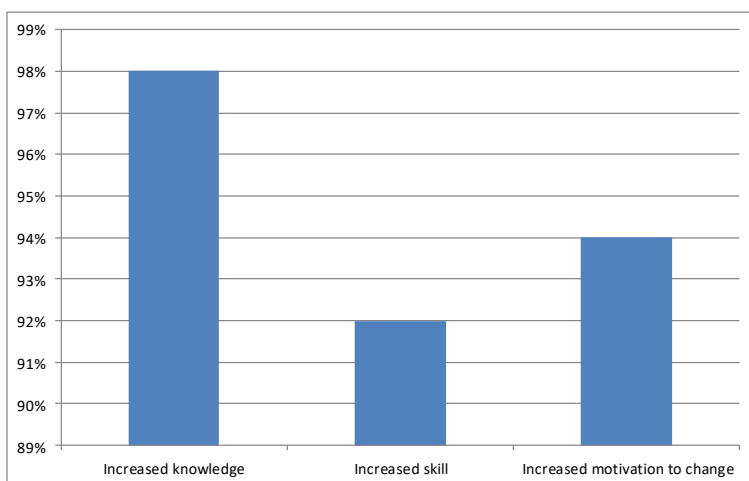
This introductory presentation to the practice of mindful meditation is available to all academic and administrative departments of the University. This one-hour session discusses the basics of a meditation practice and reviews the latest research from the field of contemplative neuroscience. Participants will also learn why the practice of mindfulness in higher education is becoming increasingly important. Includes a short guided meditation as well as an interactive mindfulness activity.

This presentation has been provided to the following departments since 2018 with a total of over 200 staff and faculty participating:

- Rush Rhees Library
- Warner School International Graduate Students
- Center for Education Abroad
- Center for Employee Wellness,
- iZone Student Staff
- Writing Speaking and Argument Faculty
- Office of the Dean of Students
- Warner School Staff & Faculty
- Residential Life Graduate Assistants
- Wilson Commons Student Activities
- School of Nursing
- Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Other presentations on the topic of mindfulness have also been presented to University departments and student organizations since 2018 with over 175 participants. These presentations include:

- Mindful Technology Use
- Mindfulness and Creativity
- Mindfulness is for Us
- The Art of Meditation
- Mindfulness During the Holiday Season
- Mindful Meetings
- Mindful Exploration of the Personality



OTHER NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Integrated Mindful University programming, such as Candlelight Yoga, into all Community Weekends in partnership with Wilson Commons Student Activities.
- Significantly increased our social media presence to approximately **2,000 followers on Instagram** with strong engagement for all posts. (@URMindfulUniversityProject)
- Partnered with Rush Rhees librarians to curate a mindfulness and meditation resource library which included the purchase of over fifty books. This was the library's **most popular collection ever**.
- Created a **new website**: www.rochester.edu/mindful.
- Created a **new position for a student employee** to lead social media marketing initiatives, peer meditation & yoga sessions, and educational outreach.
- Sent our Koru Mindfulness teachers to continuing education training called "**Exploring White Racial Identity and Whiteness.**"
- Sent two students to a 4-week **Koru Mindfulness 101 training**.

UTILIZATION OF FUNDING:

- Approximately 55%: Koru Mindfulness program – teacher compensation, teacher administration fees, and providing the Koru app for free to students.
- Approximately 30%: Staffing – yoga instructor and student employees.
- Approximately 10%: Programmatic fees (room rental, food, etc.).
- Approximately 5%: Marketing materials and giveaways.



FUTURE PLANS FOR 2021 AND BEYOND

The Mindful University Project is starting to become an important and well known initiative on campus. Students, staff and faculty realize now more than ever the importance of supporting our community's mental well-being. Participation in our programs has increased steadily over the past three years and our outcome metrics demonstrate meaningful change is starting to occur at an individual level.

We are now in a position to build on these initial successes. While maintaining the initiatives we already have in place, we must continue to grow our integration into the University of Rochester community so that we can become Ever Better.

Below are a few highlights of what's to come in 2021 and beyond:

- Creation and launch of a new **first-year course** which will focus on student flourishing, integrating not only the concepts of mindfulness and meditation, but also compassion, gratitude, and positive psychology.
- **Conduct an audit** to better assess how mindfulness and other contemplative practices are already integrated throughout the University. Use this information to fill gaps and create new partnerships.
- Expansion of our Koru Mindfulness teacher staff to include **more diverse identities**. Recruit 5 additional staff and faculty members to attend the Koru Mindfulness Certification course.
- Kick off each academic year with our signature event, the **Mindful Triathlon**, in partnership with Wilson Commons Student Activities during Yellow Jacket Weekend. This event will include a 5K walk, yoga on the quad, and a meditation practice. Invite a national thought leader from the field of mindfulness to speak at the event.
- Create **more customized programming** to meet the individualized and diverse needs of all of the University's schools.
- Work with the Admission's office and University Communications to create a Mindful University Project **brochure for prospective students**.
- Continue to **build partnerships with faculty** and provide educational tools to implement more mindful classrooms.
- Partner with the Office of Equity and Inclusion as well as the Burgett Intercultural Center to explore programming around the intersection of **mindfulness and social / racial justice work**.