

REPORT

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# MINDFUL UNIVERSITY PROJECT

**PREPARED BY**

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**ANNUAL REPORT**

**JUNE 2022**

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MINDFUL  
UNIVERSITY  
PROJECT

Start your journey today.  
Free app, workshops, weekly drop-in sessions, retreats

[rochester.edu/mindful](https://rochester.edu/mindful)  
@URMindfulUniversityProject



# ABOUT

## MISSION STATEMENT

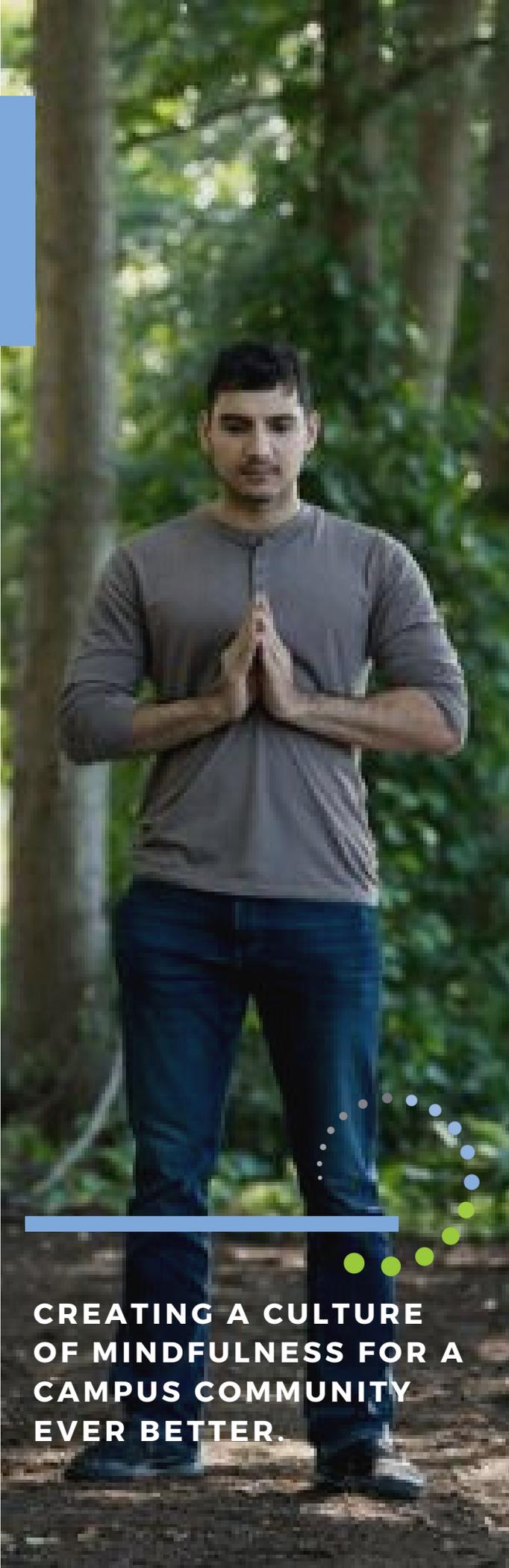
The Mindful University Project is an interdisciplinary collaboration with a mission to empower our campus community to build a culture of mindful presence and compassion to allow our students to:

- improve mental well-being
- boost academic flourishing
- increase resiliency to stress
- 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 self-compassion programs
- mindful outdoor experiences
- student mindfulness facilitator training
- educational workshops
- faculty and staff trainings



**CREATING A CULTURE  
OF MINDFULNESS FOR A  
CAMPUS COMMUNITY  
EVER BETTER.**

# MINDFULNESS EDUCATION



## KORU MINDFULNESS

Over the past four years, our largest and most popular offering is Koru mindfulness, an evidence-based 4-week program to teach individuals the practices of mindfulness and meditation. We offer both a Basic and Advanced class to help deepen an individual's practice.

In the 2021 - 2022 academic year, we offered:

- **22** Koru Basic Courses. Approximately 5-35 participants registered for each session.
- **4** Koru 2.0 Courses. 7-11 registered for each.
- **2** Relax & Renew Retreats. 28-34 participants attended each.

We also offered tailored Koru classes to serve the diverse needs of our student population:

- **Stay Woke & Meditate** for People of Color
  - **Mindful Men of Color**
  - **Peaceful Warriors** for Women of Color
  - **OutBreath** for LGBTQ+ students
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# KORU IMPACT

## SURVEY DATA

### As a result of this class:

- **94.51%** of participants reported they developed skills to manage their stress
- **94.57%** reported they were more motivated to practice meditation
- **77.17%** of participants stated that they experienced a sense of community with other participants during class
- **80.43%** of participants reported that they were better able to manage life's demands
- **91.3%** of participants stated that they intend to continue their meditation practice over the next 6 weeks

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## ANECDOTAL FEEDBACK FROM KORU

- "Learning how to meditate and be more mindful was **one of the best things I've done as a student here**. I've struggled with anxiety for many years and became really overwhelmed by everything... 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!"
- "Insights from the teacher and fellow participants helped me look at moments in my own life in a different way, and reframe my thoughts and experiences. **This class has improved my life!**"
- "The most meaningful part of the class was **connecting with people** from different levels within the U of R. Removing those hierarchical titles and seeing other members of the community as people who simply want to better themselves was refreshing."



# FOCUS ON DIVERSITY



The Mindful University Project is committed to the expectation that all individuals who engage in our programs should be met with a safe, welcoming, and respectful environment.

We strive to create equity in meeting the needs of students, faculty, and staff in a culturally responsive way.

Furthermore, we recognize that contemplative practices are unique and personal to the individual, and therefore continually work to provide offerings which resonate with our diverse University community.

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Below you will find examples of our work in the area of diversity, equity, and inclusion:

- Diverse representation of identities in our Koru teacher team.
  - Learn-to-meditate workshop offerings for a variety of affinity groups > Melanated Meditation, Mindfulness for Minority Grads, OUT Breath for LGBTQ+ Students, Mindful Men of Color, and Peaceful Warrior for Women of Color
  - Mindfulness is for Us workshop for POC students
  - Book club: The Inner Work of Racial Justice by Rhonda V. Magee
  - Partnerships with diverse yoga instructors from community organizations such as Yoga for a Good Hood
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# MINDFULNESS EDUCATION

## WORKSHOPS

The Mindful University Project offers more than just Koru. We have achieved good brand recognition and a well-tested collection of program offerings that has been expanding every year, including the following:

- Held **23 presentations** that were offered with **396** participants total.
  - Provided education to multiple departments across campus including: the School of Nursing, Rush Rhees Library, Wilson Commons Student Association, AS&E General Administration, the Office of Communications, College Advising, Counselors in Residence, Eastman Orientation Leaders, Office of Minority & Student Affairs, the Office of Disability Resources, the Electrical Computer Engineering Department, the Program of Dance & Movement, the Institutional Office of Equity and Inclusion, and the School of Medicine & Dentistry.



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# ENGAGING FACULTY AND STAFF



We know that research has found that the well-being of faculty and staff has a great impact on their their interactions with students as well as their teaching. With this, we not only open our Koru classes to faculty and staff, but offer workshops to help equip them with knowledge on mindfulness and supporting students' mental health. Here are some of the things we offer faculty and staff:

- **Supporting Student Mental Health Workshop Series**
    - Held 13 workshops so far with 363 faculty/staff members present in total
      - New workshops included:
        - Using Motivational Science to Improve Student Motivation and Well-Being
        - The “Good Enough” Professor
  - **Mindful Professor Certificate Program** pilot program coming in Spring 2023
    - Offering two, semester-long trainings with University educators on mindful leadership
    - Conducting a wait-list control study to evaluate the efficacy and fill the current gap in the research
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# RESEARCH & BENCHMARKING

What can we do better to be more competitive? To better support our students and campus community? To decrease suffering and increase connection? Student mental health and wellness are at the forefront of all institutions. Rather than reinventing the wheel, we wanted to learn about what other institutions have done to foster student emotional intelligence and improve well-being, as well as understand cost, implementation practices, student interest, and efficacy of initiatives.

To help us in this project, we hired a mindfulness consultant to research what is going on at numerous higher education institutions across the nation.

This past Spring 2022, the Mindful University Project dovetailed with the University Coalition for Student Mental Health and Wellness. The Coalition is charged with understanding the needs of our students, identify gaps, assess best practices, and form recommendations to broadly improve student mental health and wellness. This research will be instrumental in the formation of the recommendations to President Mangelsdorf.



# MOBILIZING STUDENTS



## STUDENT MINDFULNESS FACILITATOR TRAINING

According to research, peer-to-peer education are very transformative in empowering students to engage in healthy behaviors. We wanted to support our students with skills not only to support their own mental well-being, but that of their peers, as well as develop leadership skills and tap into their creativity.

In our **Student Mindfulness Facilitator training** through the Medallion Program, students learn the history of mindfulness, the neuroscience of mindfulness and meditation, various mindfulness meditation practices, trauma-sensitive approaches, inclusive language, and best practices for facilitating mindfulness.

Since Fall of 2021, **30** student mindfulness facilitators have been trained and they led meditation sessions throughout the semester, 1-3 times per week depending on time of year on Instagram, YouTube, our Podcast, and at our events.

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# PROGRAMMING



- **REJUVENATE: Engaging the Senses**
    - This event served as an opportunity for students to take a study break and immerse themselves in a sensory relaxation. The event included grounding meditations, relaxing visuals, as well as a viola accompaniment. 25 students attended.
  - **Meditation Oasis**
    - Held two events – One in Havens Lounge and one in Rush Rhees Library with comfy chairs, meditation cushions, candles, guided meditations, as well as calming visuals and music to allow students to become immersed in a relaxing experience.
  - **Day of Mindfulness**
    - Held in the Welles-Brown Oasis, this day included three meditation sessions led by Student Mindfulness Facilitators, a yoga class, arts and crafts, and therapy dogs. 137 students attended.
  - **Mindful Outdoor Experiences**
    - Held 2 sessions on the River Campus, 2 at the Eastman Campus, and one Mindful Outdoor Snowshoeing during WinterFest.
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# PARTNERSHIPS

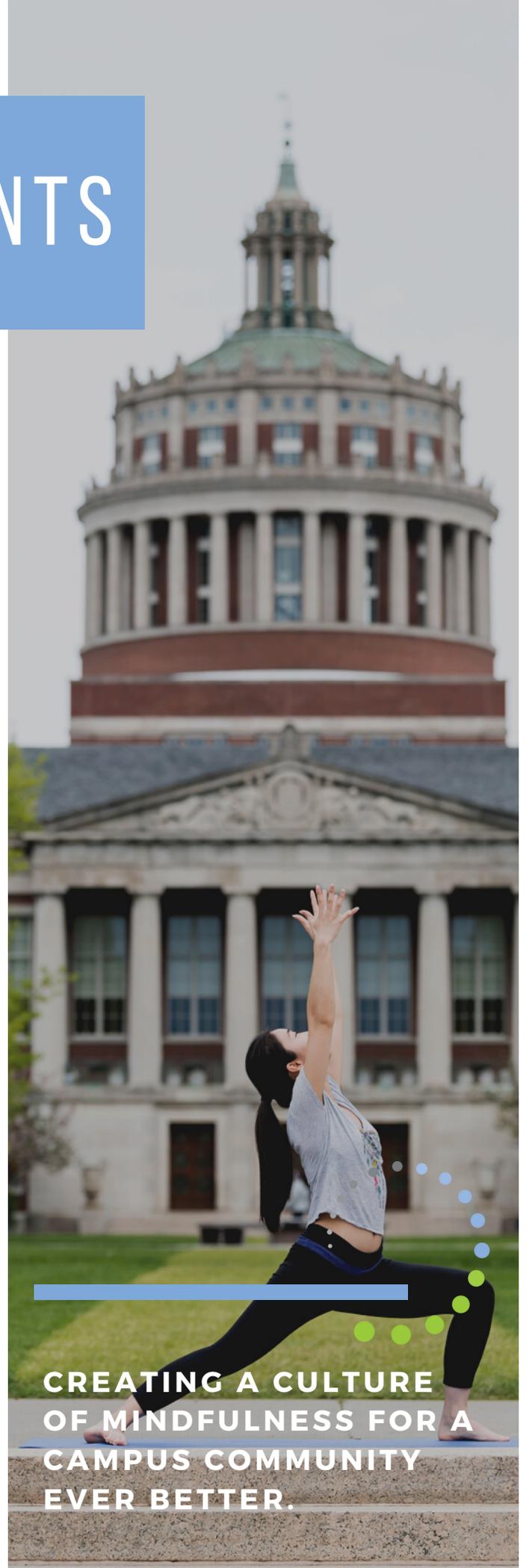
## WORKING TOGETHER TO BUILD A MORE MINDFUL CAMPUS COMMUNITY

- **Rush Rhees Library**
  - Partnered with Rush Rhee’s librarians to curate a “Grief & Loss” Collection Highlight during March 14th week, marking the 2-year anniversary of COVID-19 in the United States.
  - Helped to re-design the Welles-Brown Room into the Welles-Brown Oasis for students that is a new space for students and staff to engage in relaxation. The room includes meditation pillows, yoga mats, a labyrinth, plants, puzzles, a zen meditation garden, and wellness-related books.
- **Goergen Athletic Center**
  - Held a weekly yoga class both semesters at the GAC.
- **Graduate Student Wellness Committee**
  - Student Mindfulness Facilitators participated in the Graduate Student Wellness Fair in Spring 2022.
- **Medallion Program**
  - Collaborated with the Medallion team to offer our Student Mindfulness Facilitator training as a Medallion Program.



# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Grew a social media presence via Instagram to **2,166 followers**, a 9.4% increase since May of 2021. (@URMindfulUniversityProject)
- Received **additional funding** from our donor to continue as well as expand our offerings.
- Supporting Student Mental Health Workshop Series: Since June 2021, we have held **13 workshops** and have had over **363 attendees**.
- Trained **30** Student Mindfulness Facilitators.
- Onboarded **three new Koru Mindfulness Instructors**:
  - Mary Méndez Rizzo, Assistant Director of Student Engagement and Success, OMSA
  - Deontae McLachlan, Academic Counselors, OMSA
  - John Covach, Professor, Arthur Satz Department of Music and Eastman School of Music



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# STAFFING STRUCTURE

## *The Mindful University Project*

### ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



**REBECCA  
BLOCK**

*Director & Koru  
Teacher*

**MINDFUL  
LEADERSHIP  
CONSULTANT**

**PROGRAM  
ASSISTANT**  
*Graduate Assistant*

**KORU MINDFULNESS**  
*10 teachers*

**STUDENT  
EMPLOYEE**

**STUDENT  
MINDFULNESS  
FACILITATORS**  
*30 students*

**STUDENT ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE**  
*23 students*

**YOGA**  
*3 teachers*

**TAI CHI**  
*1 teacher*

**DANCE / PILATES**  
*2 teachers*

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