

Fact Sheet #6: The program's reputation

Wendi L. Adamek, Numata Chair in Buddhist Studies, Dept. of Classics and Religion, University of Calgary

"[BPMH is] a leader in the field of academic adaptation and innovation." (BPMH-PSD, pg. 52)

Robert Bilder, Michael E. Tennenbaum Family Distinguished Professor of Psychiatry & Biobehavioral Sciences and Psychology, Chief, Division of Psychology, David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA Jane & Terry Semel Institute for Neuroscience at UCLA, Stewart & Lynda Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital at UCLA

"Your Buddhism, Psychology and Mental Health Program is one of the flagship programs worldwide that are bringing the benefits of the contemplative sciences to benefit our students and our university communities... Your program exemplifies the integration of academic studies with well-being." (BPMH-PSD, pg. 54)

Jennifer Bright, Assistant Professor Buddhist Spiritual Care and Counselling, Emmanuel College of Victoria University

"The BPMH program is currently a world leader in education that intentionally focuses on student flourishing." (BPMH-PSD, pg. 56)

Mark Dennis, Professor, Religion Department, Director, CALM Studies, Texas Christian University; and **Blake Hestir**, Professor, Philosophy Department, Texas Christian University

"BPMH is widely respected among many of us in North American universities who are interested in fusing innovative pedagogy and pioneering research to promote flourishing on college and university campuses among students, faculty, staff, administrators, and the wider community... the BPMH team at your university has been an inspirational model for our own work." (BPMH-PSD, pg. 64)

Michel Ferrari, Professor, Applied Psychology & Human Development, OISE, University of Toronto

"BPMH represents the cutting edge and future of research and learning in the social and health sciences." (BPMH-PSD, pg. 81)

John Dunne, Distinguished Professor of Contemplative Humanities, Co-Director, Wisconsin Student Flourishing Initiative Core Faculty, Center for Healthy Minds, Tenured Faculty, Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, University of Wisconsin-Madison

"BPMH as a flagship program that is a key part of a larger movement that seeks to address the mental health crisis at universities by teaching students the knowledge and skills that make their personal development and lifelong flourishing a central goal of their formal education." (BPMH-PSD, pg. 75)

Norman Farb, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Toronto Mississauga

“It is one a few truly interdisciplinary programs, integrating experiential learning, empirical research, rich theoretical traditions from both east and west, situating this conversation within a historical context that affords students a unique understanding of their own human potential.” (BPMH-PSD, pg. 78)

David Germano, Professor, Department of Religious Studies, Director, Tibet Center, University of Virginia

“I urge you to reconsider your decision in light of the extraordinary achievements and innovations of this program. This is particularly so given that its innovations directly concern higher education and student flourishing during a time of unprecedented mental health crises among our young people... It is both rare and inspiring when one comes across a program like BPMH that targets such issues, has achieved great traction with students, and is matches innovation with economical use of resources.” (BPMH-PSD, pg. 83)

“I am both impressed and envious of the achievements of BMPH with far less resources than I have made available for faculty and staff at UVA. I have over the last few years read through syllabi, talked with students and faculty, and reviewed program documentation for BMPH. Some of the classes have been personally inspiring to me in terms of these conversations, and caused me to rethink my own assumptions about the possibilities of academic pedagogy in relationship to contemplation and new approaches for student flourishing. I am so impressed also by how the program has woven together curricular and co-curricular activities with public scholarship and research across multiple disciplines and constituencies. I would so much like to transport this program to UVA—I consider it much more impressive than what we have managed to do here with far more resources.” (BPMH-PSD, pg. 84)

HyeRan Kim-Cragg, Principal, Timothy Eaton Memorial Church Professor of Preaching Emmanuel College of Victoria University; and **Pamela McCarroll**, Vice Principal, Jane & Geoffry Martin Chair of Practical Theology, Emmanuel College of Victoria University

“It is not an overstatement to say that the BPMH program reflects the very best of what universities might hope to offer for the living of these days.” (BPMH-PSD, pg. 90)

Bee Scherer, Rector, Buddhist Seminary, Chair, Buddhist Studies, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (The Netherlands)

“[BPMH is] unique to Canada and it can boast also a trailblazing international role with only few comparable initiatives around the globe.... crucial high quality academic programme that brings excellent student recruitment, national and international acclaim, and most of all tangible results for students’ well-being, personal growth, and interdisciplinary learning.” (BPMH-PSD, pg. 106)

Tony Scott, Arts & Science Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Political Science, University of Toronto

“In many ways, Buddhism is the vanguard of the twentieth-century university. It opens itself up to textual and philological study, as in the DSR, provides opportunities for chaplaincy and community work, as in Emmanuel College, but also sheds light on the problems of psychology, mental health, and politics, as in the BPMH. The University of Toronto is now recognized as a world leader in the study of Buddhism, in no small measure to the existence of these three different approaches in the same institution.” (BPMH-PSD, pg. 108)

Michael R. Sheehy, Research Assistant Professor, Director of Scholarship, Contemplative Sciences Center Department of Religious Studies, University of Virginia

“There is a growing body of higher education institutions in North America and globally that are allocating significant resources to the study of human wellbeing through research, teaching, and leadership. The BPMH undergraduate minor at the University of Toronto is among these important epicenters. These efforts are exemplified by the Flourishing Academic Network (FAN), a consortium of leading university academic centers who are leveraging knowledge and resources among global experts to promote student flourishing and catalyze systems change in higher education. The University of Toronto is a key member in this network because the existence of the BPMH program exemplifies this vision and virtues.” (BPMH-PSD, pg. 88)

Robert W. Roser, Bennett Pierce Professor of Care and Compassion, Professor of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Health and Human Development, Pennsylvania State University

“College students in particular have both a strong interest in, and a strong need for, attention and emotion regulation strategies and meaning systems to help them to navigate the challenges and opportunities of this critical time of life at this transitional time in history. What is critically important is that programs like the one at U of Toronto offer such strategies and meaning systems and are evidence-based... This program marks your university as a leader in this innovative approach to scholarship and flourishing.” (BPMH-PSD, pg. 104)

André Vellino, Chair, School of Information Studies, University of Ottawa

“The BPMH program contributes significantly to the field of Contemplative Studies in North America by fostering an understanding of human consciousness, self-awareness, and the interplay between contemplative practices and mental health. Such contributions are not only academically valuable but also have profound implications for societal well-being.” (BPMH-PSD, pg. 98)

Jeffrey C. Walker, Philanthropist, Chairman of New Profit, Vice Chair in the Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for Health; Board Member: University of Virginia, Berklee College of Music, Grammys Music Education Coalition, On Being, Just Capital, AMP for Health, UVA’s McIntire School of Commerce, Harvard Business School, MIT Media Lab, Harvard School of Public Health; Recipient of the John C. Whitehead Award for Social Enterprise, Harvard Business School Club

“I know BPMH to be a unique and important undergraduate program focused on rigorous research and innovative experiential learning relating to student flourishing... This program is a model for universities across North America.” (BPMH-PSD, pg. 100)

Jeff Wilson, Professor, Religious Studies and East Asian Studies, Renison University College, University of Waterloo

“[BPMH] is one of Canada’s most unique and innovative academic Buddhism programs, and as such serves as a model to other universities seeking new possibilities in the areas of Religious Studies, Psychology, Health Sciences, Contemplative Studies, and student-centred support programming. It is also a highly successful program which has shown steady and impressive growth since its genesis close to two decades ago.”

“The program positively enhances all of the things that we are trying to emphasize at universities today: mental health, student peer support, intercultural learning, lifelong skills, knowledge of non-Western cultures, and innovation. Indeed, as I look at the BPMH program and consider its successes, I am strongly moved to consider whether it is something we could replicate at my own university. We would be highly pleased to have such a program available to us and our students.” (BPMH-PSD, pg. 104)

Selected Student Voices

Fifth-year student majoring in Women's Studies, BPMH and English minors

“I returned to U of T specifically to take this program.” (BPMH-PSD, pg. 30)

Third-year Linguistics Major, minoring in Human Geography and BPMH

“The BPMH Program is also one of the reasons why I have chosen UofT.” (BPMH-PSD, pg. 32)

First-year student

“The BPMH program is one of the programs which drew me to Arts and Science at UofT. When planning what school to go to and what programs to apply to in Grade 12, the BPMH program really stood out to me.” (BPMH-PSD, pg. 39)

Fifth-year History and Philosophy of Science major, minoring in Political Science and BPMH

“I am very grateful to this program and would of dropped out of UofT without it.” (BPMH-PSD, pg. 32)