

PAY IT FORWARD

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# W&M Wellness at Forefront

*The McLeod Tyler Wellness Center is making a profound impact on students*

BY ASHLEY K. SPEED



**A MODEL:** *The wellness center has become a national model for other universities that aspire to build similar facilities on their campuses.*

**F**OR KATE DONATI '20, THE MCLEOD TYLER WELLNESS Center is a place to study and meet up with her friends between classes. She says the serene atmosphere makes it unique from other spaces on William & Mary's campus. It's also a place that has created a fresh perspective about wellness on campus since it opened last year, she says.

"I have noticed an increase in positive attitudes toward wellness on campus since the center was built," says Donati, who is a yoga teacher for Campus Recreation. "I think of the wellness center as a symbol of how serious the administration is about having well-rounded students — not just looking for students who want to spend 18 hours in the library. They really want to make sure that we are taking care of ourselves and taking care of each other."

One year after opening, students say the center has left a lasting impact on campus life through services, education, programming and activities that promote a healthy lifestyle. The facility, which sits in the center of campus near the Sadler Center, houses William & Mary's Office of Health Promotion, Counseling Center, Health Center, Campus Recreation's wellness

programming and the new Center for Mindfulness and Authentic Excellence.

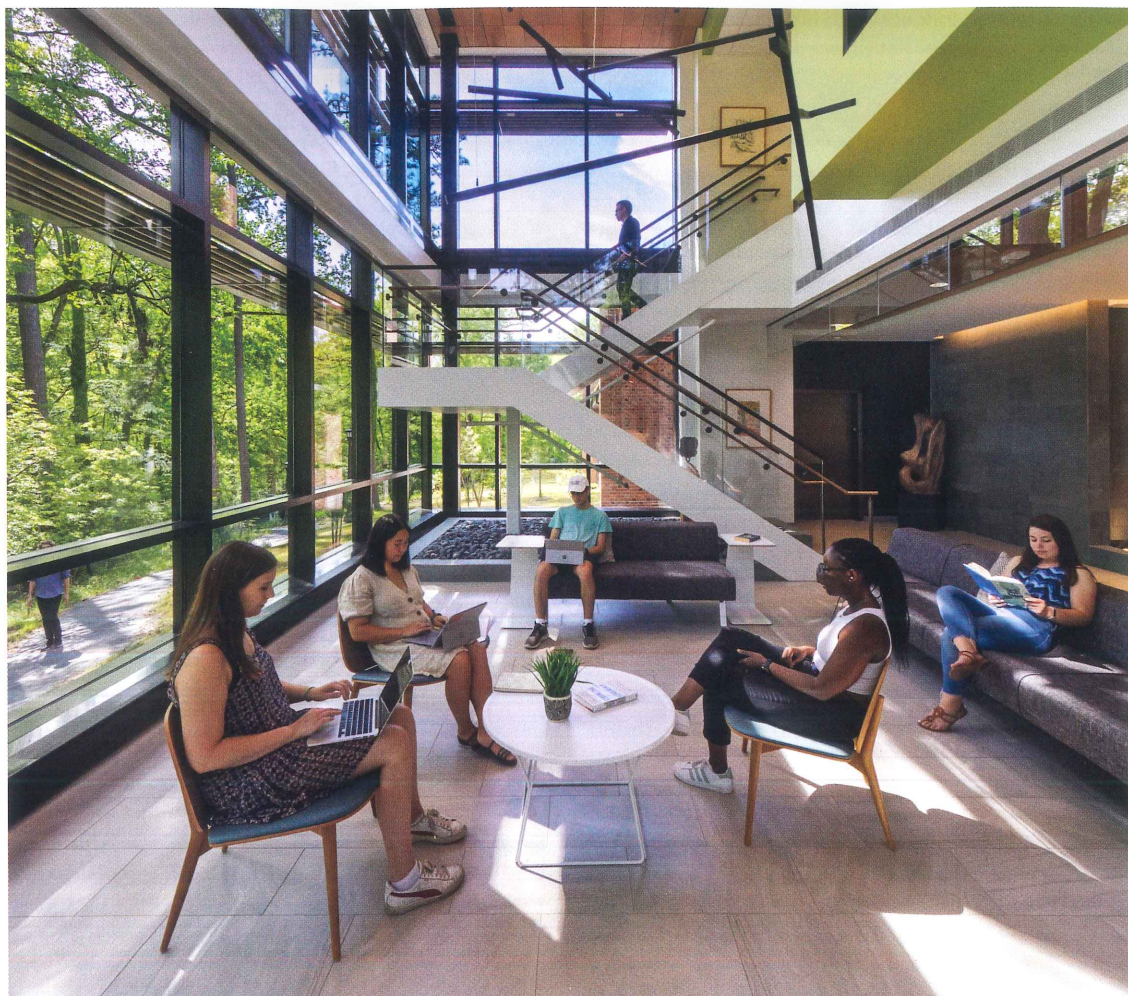
"The McLeod Tyler Wellness Center is transforming the story of wellness at William & Mary," said President Katherine Rowe. "We are one year out and already we can see it's everything that we hoped for and so much more. Its location in the center of campus reaffirms the importance of wellness and recreation for this community."

The wellness center was made possible by the support of the university's administrative leadership team and the generous philanthropy of H. Elizabeth "Bee" McLeod '83, M.B.A. '91 and J. Goodenow "Goody" Tyler III HON '11, who are longtime benefactors of the university. In addition to their initial gift of support of the facility, the couple recently established an endowment for wellness programs at the facility. Group health and wellness classes are now offered for free for all students at the wellness center and the Student Recreation Center. The endowment also funds professional instructors and equipment.

"Bee and Goody's support has just meant the world to us," says Kelly Crace, associate vice president for health and wellness. "They have always been

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**IMMEDIATE  
IMPACT:** *Yoga classes  
saw an uptick in attendance  
this past summer now that  
all group fitness classes are  
free for students.*





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champions of student wellbeing, student success and holistic excellence. They have been a beacon of holistic excellence for a long time through the things that they have supported on William & Mary's campus."

### A SAFE ZONE

For many students the wellness center serves as an escape from the hustle and bustle of life on campus, a quiet place for self-reflection. While there are counseling services and medical care offered, students often sit outside in the blue lawn chairs doing homework or studying for exams. Others relax in the Zen garden.

Helen Tariku '21, a cardio dance instructor at the recreation center, says the center has created quite a buzz among students because of its unique approach to wellness and its high visibility in the heart of campus.

"One of the reasons I decided to come to William & Mary is because I like the One Tribe, One Family aspect that we promote," Tariku says. "I think the wellness center helps foster that sentiment because it serves as a hub for students to interact and study that is different from the usual places."

Two-thirds of students who struggle with stress and anxiety do not seek treatment because of the stigma surrounding mental health and asking for help, according to the National Alliance on Mental Health. The wellness center is trying to change this by making total wellness the focus and putting five of the university's wellness departments under one roof.

"This is intended to be a learning center for students to be actively engaged about what wellness looks like for them, no matter what personal or cultural lens they have of wellness," Crace says. "Our goal is that when students come here for a specific reason like an allergy shot, they leave feeling like something bigger is going on here and they feel intrigued by it."

### CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

Allison Moyer '21 is a member of the campus group HOPE, which provides health and wellness education to students. The group holds their meetings at the wellness center.

"As a student involved in health education, it's really nice to have a resource like the wellness center to point students to for services," Moyer says. "It's a place you can go get medicine or to have a doctor look at your sore throat, but it's also a place where you can get a massage, or take a yoga or tai chi class. You may be there for one thing, but you get exposure to all these other services because it's all housed in one location."

Donati says the center's impact on her life will last beyond graduation.

"The building itself is a wonderful thing to have on campus, but the whole perspective that the wellness center brings has made the greatest impact on my life," Donati says. "I plan to focus on my own wellness in the future. As opposed to just thinking that I have to work, work, work to get the career that I want, I know that I have to include wellness in my plan in order to build a life that I love."

### A RELAXING SPACE:

*Some W&M students say the services offered at the wellness center have made them more aware of the importance of balancing academics with their wellbeing.*



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