

The Benefits of Campus Recreation for University Students

Robyn Wood and Mike Halladay

Brock University

April 5, 2010

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine the benefits campus recreation can have on University students. There are physical, psychological and social benefits that a student can receive from participating in physical activity. The following literature review is going to examine different author's opinions on physical activity and its impact on post-secondary students. The paper will conclude with examples of campus recreation facilities from five different schools, and three recommendations for the school officials regarding their campus recreation.

Literature Review

There is a growing need for University students to participate in some form of physical activity. This paper is going to discuss the importance of exercise and recreation activities on these students and the potential risk factors that could arise if they lead sedentary lives. There are many articles which will be analysed in this paper that have common themes. The three major themes related to the physical activity level of University students are physical, psychological and social benefits. There is some contradicting arguments that arise but for the majority, University students do not receive enough physical activity in their life.

The first theme related to the physical activity level of University students is the physical and health benefits they can receive from exercising. Andrijasevi et al. (2005), Irwin (2007), and Randall et al. (2007) all recognize the need for University students to increase their physical activity level. Andrijasevi et al. (2005) believes individuals who exercise will experience less discomfort when they do participate. When University students participate in physical activity they will have less medical conditions, feel less tired and experience less pain. Irwin (2007) also identifies the need for exercise. He states that when University students exercise they will gain many health benefits. Irwin (2005) believes if interventions for an increase in exercise do not

occur, there will be major health concerns. Randall et al (2007) agrees with both Andrijasevi et al. (2005) and Irwin (2007). His study showed that there were significant changes in physical activity when entering into the first year of University. He believes there is an increase in vigorous activities, but a decrease in walking of these students. He emphasized that freshman students need to increase their amount of walking in order to receive health benefits.

Another common theme within these articles was the psychological benefits University students can receive from physical activity. Nguyen et al. (2006), and Kilpatrick et al (2005) both believe there are a significant amount of psychological benefits. Nguyen-Michel et al. (2006) states physical activity can help students manage stress levels of students. If University students were to increase their level of physical activity, it could significantly reduce their stress and sedentary behaviour. Nguyen-Michel et al. (2008) believes University students will benefit from psychologically from physical activity. Kilpatrick et al. (2005) also recognizes the importance of physical activity on a student's psychological mindset. He believes physical activity will enhance a student's motivation. His study showed students are more motivated to participate in sports rather than exercise. Sports are intrinsically motivated due to the enjoyment and challenge of the game. Exercise is more externally motivated since there is a focus on appearance and weight and stress management. Kilpatrick et al. (2005) believes if students participate in more physical activities, they will have greater extrinsic motivations to continue.

The last theme this paper is going to discuss is the importance of physical activity on a student's social life. Being socially connected with friends and peers allocates individuals to participate in more physical activities. Brawley et al. (1997) performed a study where college friends participated in a group physical exercise and they noted that it helped increase their

revitalization time when working with peers. Participating with other friends and peers increased the participant's levels of self efficacy as the exercise training continued.

Physical exercise is a main priority in everyone's daily life, whether going to the gym or going for a run, physical exercise is critical to staying healthy. Levitt (2006) states runners tend to often run in groups because they crave social interaction with others, they thrive off others success and push themselves to keep up.

There are contradicting results related to participating in recreation activities with friends. When exercising with friends and peers, there may be a level of competition or bitterness between the two participants. For people who work at a desk all day, Levitt (2006) argues that they should choose physical exercise that does not require a lot of social interaction because they could take out their anger on someone who had nothing to do with his or her problems.

According to (Gruber, 2008) exercising with friends and peers is a highly suggested way to help a person feel better about their weight, diet and exercise patterns. When students work out with friends and peers in a social network, they are constantly reminded of the benefits and consequences of work out habits and dietary habits as well (Gruber, 2008). Friends can push each other to the next level making them accomplish their personal best and allocating time and effort in order to become as healthy as possible. Social support in general has been shown to promote devotion to dieting and exercise programs to achieve weight loss (Gruber, 2008).

In conclusion, there are many benefits an individual can receive of physical activity. Each one of these authors offered their knowledge regarding physical activity and many potential benefits. They suggest that students should increase their exercise level to fully experience a better life. The benefits the students can receive definitely out-weigh the costs of any activity.

University students need to be educated in all of the benefits of exercise and utilize that knowledge for their wellbeing.

Recommendations for Improvements

After reviewing the above literature review, it is important to determine what post-secondary schools are offering in regards of campus recreation. It is crucial that all schools are offering recreation programs and opportunities for students that are going to physically and mentally benefit them. The following five post-secondary schools offer different opportunities and rates for their campus recreation. After analyzing these schools, it will be easier to identify their areas that need improvement.

Brock University offers an excellent recreation facility to the students and the community. Their facility consists of three gymnasiums, a two hundred meter track, squash courts, the Zone fitness centre, a swimming pool, four tennis courts and seven playing fields. All students that attend Brock University have access to the track, gymnasiums, the pool, squash and outdoor tennis courts with no fee at all. There is a membership fee for access to the Zone fitness centre. The membership includes use of a day locker and shower, sauna, squash and outdoor tennis courts, track, gymnasiums, studios and the Zone fitness centre. For one school year, the price of the membership is \$334.00 for Brock students and staff, or \$434.00 for the community. This price seems steep compared to the next four schools to be examined.

Durham College also has a campus recreation facility that offers memberships to students. This school offers a full one year membership which includes access to their fitness centre, gymnasium, squash courts, running track and change rooms with sauna. The total cost of this membership is \$345.00 + GST. This does not include fitness classes. This is similar to the price of Brock University but Brock actually offers programs within their tuition fee.

Similar to Brock University, McGill University offers an Athletic and Recreation fee in the student's tuition. This automatically gives the students access to many facilities, including indoor and outdoor tracks, gymnasiums, swimming pool, indoor and outdoor tennis courts, squash courts, and outdoor fields. This membership does not include access to their Fitness Centre. McGill students are offered an excellent fee for memberships which they have to purchase on a semester basis. The cost to join the McGill fitness centre is only \$20.00 a semester. This price seems a lot reasonable than Brock University and Durham College.

The University of Guelph offers a wide variety of recreation programs. Their facility includes a twin pad arena, two hundred meter track, two pools, three gymnasiums, squash courts, climbing walls, a weight room, outdoor sports fields, a baseball diamond and many volleyball courts. The arenas, pools, tracks and diamonds are offered on an hourly rate which can be booked by the students at any time. The fees range from \$23.00 to \$226.00 an hour. There is also a fee to join the fitness centre, which is \$64.00 for two semesters. The fitness centre membership gives the student access to the cardio theatre, super circuit and the strength training rooms. These fees seem reasonable considering the variety of programs being offered at this school.

The last post-secondary school being examined is Ottawa University. This school seems to be the most advanced with their programs since they do not offer any fee to use them. Students automatically receive a membership to the school's Sports Services which includes access to the fitness centre, aerobics classes, swimming pool, squash courts, gymnasiums, outdoor field sports and skating rink. Ottawa University only charges an extra fee for instructional, outdoor and intramural activities. This encourages students to be physical active since they are offered programs for free. This could be a motivating factor for participation if

students are financially unstable. Students are already paying for tuition, books and residence and should not be worried about recreation fees as well.

Each one of these schools has positive and negative aspects to their campus recreation. After analyzing these post-secondary schools there are three recommendations that can be made. The first recommendation that post-secondary schools should do, is to offer a variety of programs that reach the need of all students. The University of Guelph strives to offer their students an assortment of programs and facilities such as dance studios, swimming pools, and baseball diamonds. Not every student is going to be interested in the same programs, so it is important to ensure inclusion and provide diverse opportunities for the students. A needs assessment is a moderate idea that will allow the campus recreation department a better understanding of what programs they should offer to their students. With the needs assessment, the proper management and activities can be promoted to fit the needs of the students. This issue is critical to the success of programs. However, with the need for offering a variety of programs, also comes a growing concern with the high costs required for providing these facilities to the students.

Relating to the first recommendation, it is imperative to offer free or cheap memberships for the students. By ensuring students that memberships are reasonably priced, it will increase the amount of participation in campus recreation. Another recommendation regarding the price of memberships is to provide a mandatory fee within the student's tuition which will gain them access to all recreation opportunities. By making this mandatory, students may feel responsible to take full advantage of the facilities being offered since they are already paying for them. This will target students who have previously never spent money on campus recreation and it can provide them with an opportunity to socially connect with the larger school community.

The last recommendation that post-secondary schools should do is to ensure students are educated about campus recreation and are aware of the benefits it provides. Many students who are unfamiliar with physical activity might feel reluctant to start participating in a new program. They may be unaware of how to engage in the activity and feel discouraged. It is important to provide awareness of the benefits student's can receive from physical activity. In the Applied Health Science programs, the students are constantly being taught the benefits of physical activity, but in programs such as Mathematics or English, the students are unaware of the potential advantages they can receive. Benefits and the importance of memberships are not highly promoted throughout the schools. Students are unaware of the benefits they can obtain by being involved. By educating all students about campus recreation, it can potentially increase participation rates and benefit the student. It is important that every post-secondary school adheres to these recommendations in order for students as well as campus recreation programs to succeed and further develop.

Conclusion

This paper examined five different post-secondary schools and their campus recreation. The goal was to determine the benefits of campus recreation and physical activity on students and determine how these schools can enhance their programs. Each of these schools offers a variety of programs and facilities as well as different fees. Students need to be offered opportunities to be physically active and properly educated regarding the benefits they can receive from campus recreation. Post-secondary school officials should look further into the benefits of physical activity, and ensure they are doing everything they can do to promote a healthy living lifestyle for their students.

Reference

- Andrijasevi, M., Pausi, J., Bavcevi, T., Ciliga, D. (2005). Participation in leisure activities and self-perception of health in the students of the University of Split. *Kinesiology: 37*, 21-31.
- Brawley, L. R., Rejeski, W. J. & Turner, E. E. (1997). Psychological benefits of physical activity are influenced by the social environment. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology: 19*, 119-130.
- Brock University. (2010). *Recreation Services*. Retrieved from <http://www.brocku.ca/recreation-services>
- Durham College. (2010). *Athletics*. Retrieved from http://www.durhamcollege.ca/EN/main/places_to_go/places_to_get_healthy/athletics.php
- Gruber, J. K. (2006). Social support for exercise and dietary habits among college students. *Adolescence: 43*, 557-575.
- Irwin, J. D. (2007). The prevalence of physical activity maintenance in a sample of University students: A longitudinal study. *Journal of American College Health: 56*, 37-42
- Kilpatrick, M., Hebert, E. & Bartholomew, J. (2005). College students' motivation for physical activity: Differentiating men's and women's motives for sport participation and exercise. *Journal of American College Health: 54*, 87-94.
- Levitt, S. (2006). Mind over muscles. *Vegetarian Times. 27-30*.
- McGill University. (2010). *McGill Athletics and Recreation*. Retrieved from <http://www.mcgill.ca/athletics/>
- Nguyen-Michel, S. T., Unger, J B., Hamilton, J. & Spruijt-Mets, D. (2006). Associations between physical activity and perceived stress/hassles in college students. *Stress and Health: Journal of the International Society for the Investigation of Stress: 22*, 179-188.

Randall, N. B., Han, J. L., Dinger, M. K., Heesch, K. C., Fields, D. A. & Knehans, A. W. (2007)

American Journal of Health Studies: 22, 42-45.

Simons, H. D., Bosworth, C., Fugita, S. & Jensen, M. (2007). The athletic stigma in higher

education. *College Student Journal: 41, 251-273.*

University of Guelph. (2010). *Guelph Gryphons*. Retrieved from

<http://www.athletics.uoguelph.ca/>

University of Ottawa. (2010). *University of Ottawa Gee Gees*. Retrieved from

<http://www.geegees.ca/?q=node/181>