

Policy Makes Physical Activity Easier At Baker College

Initiative in Brief

“I was walking down the hallway with the president of the campus, and he said [that since] we have a nice new fitness center; we should really have a wellness initiative. I agreed and he told me that I was the chair.” Thus David Darrow became the chair of the wellness committee, which includes members from various departments such as director of surgical technology, financial aid director, and assistant registrar.

The wellness committee proposed implementing a policy that would grant full-time employees 90 minutes of paid time to exercise throughout the week and 45 minutes for the part-time employees with the hope that employees would match that time with their own time to use the fitness center. Initially 32 of Baker’s 50 employees signed up to participate in this initiative, and the participation has remained between 60% and 80%. Baker’s employee wellness program offers a number of programs throughout the year that are at a nominal cost or free to the employees, such as a nutritionist discussing eating habits, martial arts instruction, Pilate’s classes, workplace chaplains facilitating job-related discussions, and walking groups during lunch hours.

The wellness committee held another kick-off in mid-September 2007 with a healthy potluck. At that time they asked people to come up with a fitness plan to ensure that the wellness activities address employees’ interests. They are also exploring the idea of weekend programs such as trail rides, hikes or canoe trips. Baker College has now budgeted an additional \$16,000 for more exercise equipment: a decision that probably came up during a walking meeting!

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Benefits

Noted benefits of the program are:

- Implemented a policy that allows physical activity during the workday.
- Camaraderie was built among employees as they worked on common health-related goals.
- Workplace infrastructure provides physical activity opportunities for employees.

“Sometimes it’s hard to keep up the momentum; it’s good to keep changing the members of the committee to keep coming up with new ideas.”

David Darrow
Dean of General Education

Lessons Learned

- A commitment to health is encouraged by an agreement made with the participants.
- Support received from the president of the campus has been important.
- Meet with other institutions that are doing initiatives to share ideas.

Cost: Paid employee time, step counters, professional development speakers, and wellness library

Risk Factor: Physical inactivity, poor nutrition

Impact/Reach: 50

Business/Sector: Education