

Survey Responses From “Wellness for Life” Classes: Overall Value and Barriers, Motivators, and Motives Towards Physical Activity

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Skill-based sport activity classes were the historical trend, but greater numbers of higher education institutions now offer courses that encompass “wellness for life” concepts. The goal of these offerings is to guide students in the development of knowledge, skills, and behaviors to adopt and maintain healthful behaviors. There is a need to amass evidence of the outcomes arising from engagement in these classes. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this work was to document outcomes from participation in a single, semester-long, university wellness for life class. **METHODS:** Students were recruited from courses at two universities. Survey responses were collected in the first two and final two weeks of class. The survey items included identification of: engagement in regular physical activity (PA), perceptions about PA (“view of self as an exerciser”, “contentment with current PA level”, among others), and barriers, motivators, and motives towards PA. There were no intervention suggestions provided to instructors. **RESULTS:** A total of 173 students (m/f/not identified = 51/118/4; age 19.6 ± 1.4) participated. When questioned, many students identified as being an “exerciser.” Some perceived “no need to change their program” (n=37) but most “wanted more regular exercise” (n=88). A lesser number of students identified as being a “non-exerciser.” Most all “wanted more regular exercise” (n=46), but two had “no desire to start a program.” At post-test, the respective numbers were: 37, 95, 41, and 3. Numbers did not always align due to incomplete survey responses. The perceived value of the class to current and future health, rated on a scale from 0 (no impact)-100 (most influential), improved pre-post class ($p < 0.001$) from 61.7 (±24.5) to 67.8 (±23.5). The top barrier, motivator, and motive at pre-test were: “I need to do better at managing my time to exercise more often,” “If I better organized my time or schedule I could exercise more,” and “I get pleasure or enjoy sports so I exercise,” respectively. There was shuffling among the top choices from pre- to post-test, but the top barrier remained the same. The top motivator became, “If I had more time I would exercise more,” and the top motive became, “I feel less stress after I exercise.” **DISCUSSION:** Evidenced by the pre-post responses, students feel that wellness for life classes have some benefit and that perception improves after experiencing the class. There appears to be consistency in those who view themselves as “exercisers” and “non-exercisers,” which might represent a precarious situation. There is constancy in the primary barrier to exercise – the socially acceptable answer – time. It is obvious that time management is a critical element for inclusion in these classes. Students may also benefit more if instructors would offer insight on the use of motivators and motives in overcoming personal barriers.