

Implementing Group Fitness Classes at EOU

Proposal Paper

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Group Fitness

According to Healthy Population (2009), “the latest exercise trend” sweeping the world is group fitness. Group fitness classes are becoming increasingly more popular for many reasons, including the length of the classes, the total body workout you receive, and it is easier to be motivated in a team environment with an instructor to guide your workout. Many workout facilities offer a variety of group fitness classes throughout different times of the day to appeal to the workout preference and schedule of a wide population of people.



Designing your own workout plan can pose as a challenge to most people unless they have the needed expertise in fitness. The reality of it is that the average person does not have the needed expertise to design, as well as put into action their own workout plan that would best suit their body, time needs, and motivational factors. A major benefit of group fitness sessions is the fact that the planning and instructing is done for the person who attends the class by a qualified instructor. These programs are researched and developed by an experienced team of doctors, trainers and physiologists so that moves are simple, safe and effective in getting the results that they promise (“Add Group Fitness Programs”, 2010). The plan of the workout is left up to the trained instructor, while only attendance is required from the individual. The routines are targeted exercises that work the whole body (“Group Fitness”, 2009). All programming is refreshed and enhanced every few months to keep you challenged and to keep the excitement going (“Add Group Fitness Programs”, 2010).

Group fitness offers a variety of different classes. There is anything from kickboxing to belly dancing to yoga offered from most fitness facilities. A main benefit is these classes are offered at times to fit into the schedules of all different lifestyles. Classes are offered throughout various times during the day. Also these classes typically only meet twice a week and last 45 minutes to an hour (“Group Fitness”, 2009). Different classes are designed for different levels of fitness, offering class choices

anywhere from the beginner to the advanced fitness person. Another benefit is the unique nature of these classes, attracting newcomers to the world of fitness.



Being pushed by an instructor, along with the group/team atmosphere of group workout classes offers many people the needed motivation to attend workout classes as well as push themselves during these sessions. You're more likely to complete a well-rounded exercise routine and get a potentially tougher workout with group fitness sessions (Fritz, 2008).

The current workout facility at Eastern Oregon University offers its users a wide variety of amenities, yet it is lacking the opportunity for facilitated workouts. The facility is currently equipped with the necessary equipment and appropriate area for group fitness classes, the missing piece is the offering of group fitness classes. A cost effective and efficient way to implement such classes is for them to be offered through the INTACT program already in place at EOU.

INTACT

Implementing group fitness classes to EOU could be done through the INTACT program. INTACT classes are taught on campus (but that varies if the class needs to be located somewhere else, i.e. a hiking class) and are taught generally by students (M. Litchfield, personal communication, February 23, 2010). The qualifications to be an instructor are pretty minimal, the student just needs to have a pretty good idea and experience pertaining to whatever they want to teach about. A student must submit an INTACT course proposal form (See Appendix A) to the INTACT office by the specified deadline; this deadline is typically about 6 weeks prior to the term the class will be taught. The course proposal form includes things such as the course goals, course design, grading criteria, teaching qualifications, materials needed, meeting dates and times, as

well as if your class will need use of college facilities. Once this form is filled out, it will go through an evaluation process including be reviewed by the INTACT director, Molly Litchfield, and then the registrar's office for their final approval and posting the class on Webster.

The classes offered vary each term, a list of the proposed classes for the Spring 2010 are Understanding everyday words I and II, Beginning Knitting, ASEOUE Senate and Executive training, Sexual Myth and Reality, Conversational Spanish, Southern Cooking, Intro to Mountain Biking, Beginning Rock Climbing, and Intermediate Rock Climbing (M. Litchfield, personal communication, February 23, 2010). From this list the classes proposed that would qualify as workout/exercise classes are the rock climbing and the mountain biking classes. These classes offer physical activity, but don't offer strenuous exercise opportunities for students as received through the proposed group fitness classes.

One problem with the current INTACT program at EOU is the fact that the instructors are not compensated in any way for their time or effort in teaching the classes. Not only do the instructors receive no pay, but they don't even receive the credit themselves as they would if they were in the class instead of instructing it. With the current process of INTACT classes, in theory, a person would be better off taking the class and receiving a credit than teaching the class and receiving no compensation whatsoever.

Classes such as gymnastics or aerobics, for example, have been offered at EOU in the past, but have come and gone over the years. One solution to the inconsistency of the group fitness classes at EOU is to offer incentives to the instructors, compensating them for their time and making the process of being an instructor more appealing. According to the INTACT director, Molly Litchfield, "Last year the program pushed for getting a credit waiver for the class if the instructor decides to take it themselves too, but the administration was pretty stringent on not allowing that to happen." A solution to offering instructors incentives for teaching the proposed group fitness classes would be offering a class for instructors of INTACT classes. This class would be run like a class in which you get practicum credits for experience you are gaining. The amount of credits you are able to receive is usually based on the amount of work you do, and up to the discretion of your teacher. The average amount of credits is usually anywhere from 1-6, depending on the time spent, the work in relation to your major, and the quality of the work documented to the professor. Because group fitness classes are related to physical activity and health, the professor in charge of this particular practicum would need to be a teacher from the physical activity and health department. One of the current requirements for an INTACT class is that you must have an instructor of record, meaning a professor on campus must sign to be your supervisor for your class. This could coincide perfectly with the professor who is in charge of the practicum classes.

Experience

Going through the process of proposing an INTACT class and getting the plan implemented would be exceptional experience as far as the instruction portion, as well as preparing a curriculum and plan for the class. In order to prepare the course design and

course goals of a workout class, the student must show expertise in the subject from personal experience or intellect gained. When designing a group fitness class, as the instructor you have the responsibility of planning workouts that will best benefit your students. Research and knowledge of the subject is needed in order to be successful in planning the workouts of other people, allowing them to receive a total body workout.

For a student who is pursuing a degree with the career goals of becoming a teacher, coach, administrator, personal trainer, or even nutritionist, being the instructor of a group fitness class poses a great opportunity for experience. And this experience will only add to ones resume appeal. For those students who are looking to pursue teaching these classes in their futures at workout facilities, certification will be required. This experience will further the individual in seeking their certification. In addition to planning the curriculum of the class, the instructor is in charge of how often and for how long the class will meet throughout the course of the term. On average, group fitness classes meet twice a week for a duration of 40 minutes to an hour (“Go for a Group Fitness Class”, 2009). This allows adequate recovery time between sessions, while completing the duration of an aerobic workout for the body. The chosen meeting times should be convenient for the instructor, as well as convenient for students with busy class schedules. Most INTACT classes are held in the evenings, attendance is graded on a pass/fail basis in case the student can’t make all the meeting times for some reason.

Along with the planning portion of teaching a group fitness class comes the actual instruction. The instructor must be prepared prior to the session in order to run an effective and efficient group fitness routine, keeping the class motivated and on-schedule. Being a student instructing a class of your peers can pose difficult and nerve-racking to some, yet making it a greater accomplishment and experience once completed.

Location

Through the INTACT proposal form there is a portion to state if the use of college facilities is needed for your class. The INTACT program will help you find a place for your class, and if a specific room is needed you can specify that through the proposal form. Group fitness classes are usually held in a large, open room where there are mirrors lining the front wall allowing the participants to view themselves, as well as the movements of the instructor in the front of the classroom.

EOU happens to already have one of these aerobics-type rooms on campus which would be a perfect place to hold group fitness classes. The room is located in the Quinn Athletic facility, and is available to the use of students and classes upon scheduling request through the athletic office. This room comes equip with the majority of the required materials to run a group fitness class. There are already aerobic steps in the room, and light pound weights are available for use.

The room is lacking a build-in stereo system for these workouts, but a c.d. player/stereo is located in the room for use. Typically physical activity and health INTACT classes offered through EOU have an enrolment maximum of 10 people (M. Litchfield, personal communication, February 23, 2010). The suggested location would allow for a capacity of 20 students to attend.



Aerobics Room in Quinn Athletic Facility

Implementation

To implement my proposal of adding group fitness classes to be offered at EOU, after the class is passed by an instructor to supervise for practicum credits, students must be informed this is a new option available, as to attract interested students to the new program. With the opportunity of compensation through receiving practicum credits, the appeal of teaching a fitness INTACT class grows to students. After an instructor teaches a class and then graduates and moves on from Eastern, the goal of the program is to have students who previously participated in the classes be able to take over the instructing, as to continue the classes even through the cycling of students.

Group fitness classes can be a variety of different subjects, the preference coming from the students and the instructors comfort level with different areas of fitness. Potential classes that can be offered cover a large range of subject, from strength to dancing. Offering different classes can be beneficial, as well as changing up the classes offered from term to term. Your goal with group fitness classes is to keep people coming back for more, preferably with friends in tow (Eason, 2007, p. 30-33). That happens when your members see results and don't get bored doing the same old moves to the same old music month after month (Eason, 2007, p. 30-33). To keep a new program like this continuing from term to term, interest must be sparked upon the attendees to not only complete a term, but keep attending each term.

In order for this proposal to be a sustainable plan, the key is to provide incentives for the student instructor. By allowing the student to receive practicum credits for the time they spend implementing an INTACT class, the student is gaining experience as well as obtaining credits toward their degree. With this incentive the motivation and interest to make these classes a reality increases.

There are many students on-campus who put a large emphasis in their lives on working out. Also, there is a large majority of students who are seeking careers related to physical activity and health. The only opportunity students currently have to participate in such classes is through the local club. This is a costly alternative for students, and is unnecessary considering the exceptional quality of the current EOU facility available to students included in their student fees. Implementation of my proposal will allow students to improve their physical health, diversify their education, and improve overall quality of life, all while receiving credits for taking or teaching the group fitness classes.

Appendix A

INTACT COURSE PROPOSAL

THIS PROPOSAL MUST BE RETURNED TO THE INTACT OFFICE NO LATER THAN THE FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19TH

NAME: _____

EMAIL: _____

PHONE: _____

PROPOSED TITLE OF COURSE: _____

INSTRUCTOR OF RECORD: _____

*** The Instructor of Record is a member of the teaching faculty who has agreed to act as an advisor or supervisor for your class. The Instructor of Record will submit grades and sign add/drop forms for students. Please suggest the name of an instructor with whom you are comfortable working. If you do not know someone we will find an instructor for you.

TEACHING QUALIFICATIONS:

***Please list your experience with the subject matter of the course. This may include personal exploration of the subject, a teaching license, and more. Please provide as much information as is relevant.

COURSE GOALS:

***Please tell us the purpose of your class and what you hope the students will learn.

GRADING CRITERIA:

Once we receive your class proposal we will begin the approval process. An outline of this process is included at the end of this document. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

INTACT PROGRAM INSTRUCTOR AGREEMENT

By submitting this course proposal to the INTACT staff, I realize that I will be required to attend a mandatory instructor-training meeting with the INTACT staff prior to teaching an INTACT course. Failure to attend this meeting will result in the cancellation of my class. I recognize that I will be briefed at this meeting on policies and procedures of the INTACT program. I will be asked to sign an instructor contract at this meeting, which I will be held responsible for while teaching in the INTACT program. I agree to all of the terms listed in this statement.

PRINT NAME

SIGNATURE AND DATE

References

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