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Personal Training for a Campus Recreation Setting

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Personal Training for a Campus Recreation Setting

The objective of my project was to find a way to implement personal training into Western Oregon University's Health and Wellness Center. Personal health and wellness is a huge part of my life. I share my passion through the fitness classes I teach, working at the Health and Wellness Center, and studying Exercise Science with a minor in Health. Being a part of a college campus gym setting, I witness many students struggle to move out of their comfort zone. With no personal trainers on staff, students are left to experiment with weights, machines, and other exercise routines which may cause an injury, or give up all together because they feel discouraged. A need exists for a systematic program of fitness instruction that is available to all interested students. I strongly believe by providing resources to students they may feel more comfortable in the gym setting, and be more inclined to sustain a healthy lifestyle. Teaching students to live in good health while in college is important. It will hopefully promote a better quality of life after school. Major health implications due to lifestyle is a huge issue in our country. We can help prevent this by educating our students through private mentors for more individualized assistance with their health fitness goals.

Working as a fitness instructor, I have had many patrons note their appreciation to the basics of weightlifting. They also state that they wish they could have more knowledge so that they feel more comfortable in the main weight room. My vision is to improve the services provided by campus recreation by providing individualized training. By providing individualized training students may gain a better understanding of the safety aspects in the weight room and exercises, while also gaining confidence to feel more comfortable around peers.

My first step in the project was to see how other schools were able to successfully offer personal training. Schools such as University of Oregon, and Oregon State offered the service to students, but for an additional fee. For bigger universities with larger student populations, this may have worked, but for a smaller school such as Western Oregon, we do not have as many students to keep the program successful. We would need a higher ratio of clients. Another observation I made from the other schools were that all personal trainers were students, and they had certifications from various different organizations.

My next step in the process was to speak to Western Oregon University's Campus Recreation Director Rip Horsey. It was clear after speaking with him for a few minutes that personal training was too risky for our facility. We also do not have the funds for it. However, I learned that Campus Recreation is currently in the process of trying to create a similar program, but rather than personal training, having small intimate groups. The title of these employees would not be personal trainers, but “fitness coaches”, or “fitness specialists”. This service would be free to students, and they could sign up for it almost daily. With the same goal in mind, a fitness specialist would take a small group of individuals, and provide an introduction to the facility, equipment, and exercises, while answering questions the students may have. There is no limit on the number of classes students may sign up for. At first I was disappointed in the initial meeting with Rip, and the rejection of a personal training program. However, after listening to the reasons why personal training has too much liability, and the similarities to small group training, I decided to change direction with my project. Rather than focusing on personal training for a campus recreation setting, I looked more into small group training.

The biggest roadblock for Western Oregon’s Campus Recreation to get fitness coaches is the funding. According to Rip, our budget does not allow for the training of the coaches, as well

as the hourly pay. Rip also mentioned that he does not want to charge an extra fee for students. Western Oregon's Campus Recreation is currently in the process of working with the Incidental Fee Committee (IFC), to receive a bigger budget to allow a fitness specialist program to begin.

While Western Oregon University is still in the process of finding the budget for a fitness specialist, I created a pamphlet that any campus recreation site may use to start a fitness specialist position (including Western Oregon University when the time is right). Attached, I have included a job description that will help with the search for qualified individuals to hire for the position. I have also created a generalized training manual that can easily be manipulated to fit the needs of different schools. Attached to the training manual are pre-participation questionnaires, as well as ACSM risk stratification for safety precautions. Originally, I had thought it would be a good idea to create a test that students would need to pass before they are able to work with clients, but as I was creating the test I realized that each question would need to be so individualized per facility, environment, and population, that it would be too difficult to create a generalized test.

Throughout the process, there were many obstacles involved in creating a program for small group training. I did not realize there was so much liability on the actual trainers. JoAnn Eickhoff-Shemek, an Exercise Science Professor at the University of South Florida in Tampa, created a collection of negligence lawsuits against personal trainers. In the document there are seven main reasons for lawsuits against personal trainers: 1) employment issues 2)pre-activity health screening 3)health/fitness assessment and health fitness prescription 4) instruction and supervision- general, instruction and supervision-personal fitness trainers, instruction and supervision-group exercise leaders 5) exercise equipment 6) facility issues 7) emergency action plans. The job description and qualifications that I have created may assist in eliminating

unqualified employees (number one category in lawsuit negligence). In the training manual attached, I was able to emphasize other areas in the hopes that it may lower the risk of injury and harm. The training manual pre-participation questionnaire, along with risk stratifications are included to eliminate potential health issues associated with exercise (numbers two and three in the lawsuit negligence). Spotting techniques and exercise progressions are included for instruction and supervision (number four in lawsuit negligence), and emergency action plans are set in place in the case of an emergency (number seven in lawsuit negligence).

The second obstacle I ran into was funding. In the beginning, I thought that it would be easy to find ways to avoid budget issues. My original plan included utilizing exercise science majors as the personal trainers for their practicum or internship. That would eliminate hourly pay, and still allow the students to receive credit for their work. After speaking with Rip, I realized that utilizing exercise science students in the campus recreation is not an option (for our campus at least). Too much liability would be placed on the students, and they may not have enough credentials to be able to fulfill that job. He also brought to my attention that there would still be a need for a supervisor to monitor the students. Who would that supervisor be? Would that need to be a full time position? That would require a budget as well. Therefore, providing credit hours for exercise science students is not as simple as I thought.

Overall, for the duration of this project I have learned a lot. My project revised from a personal training program in a campus recreation setting, to more of a small group coach such as a “fitness specialist”. With the job description and training manual I have created, other university campus recreation programs may also be able to start a fitness specialist position. As I am about to enter into the fitness industry, I am so glad I was able to study deeper into the creation of a new program such as a fitness specialist. The seven aspects of lawsuit negligence

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prepare me for a future in fitness related fields. I understand why specific rules, and policies are in place. While the funding is still a current issue for Western Oregon University, at least when and if the opportunity arises, there will be a position program set in place. As I look into the future, my goal now will be to keep working with Rip and the IFC to find the funds to officially create a fitness specialist position for the students of Western Oregon University to use as a resource for sustained healthy living.