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**DETERMINANTS OF EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION
IN AGENCY-SPONSORED HEALTH AND FITNESS PROGRAMS**

A Research Paper Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of the
Department of Occupational and Technical Studies

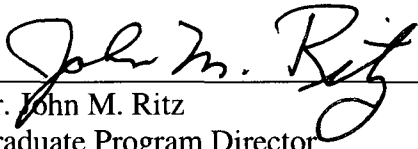
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree of Master of Science
In Occupational and Technical Studies

By
Patricia D. Martin
July 2002

APPROVAL PAGE

This graduate research paper was prepared by Patricia D. Martin under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in OTED 636, Problems in Occupational and Technical Education. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Occupational and Technical Studies.

APPROVED BY:



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DATE: 7-24-02

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Employee participation in the health and fitness programs sponsored by Southwest Virginia Community College leaves much to be desired. An on-campus Community Center that offers weight-training facilities, racquetball/walleyball and basketball courts, an aerobic/dance room, indoor/outdoor climbing walls, tennis courts, outdoor walking track, and showers and lockers is used by many members of the community, and a fair number of students, but few members of the college faculty and staff. Although use of the facility is free to all college employees, both full-time and part-time, and to those who work on-campus or at off-campus sites, only a small number of employees regularly use the physical fitness amenities offered at the Community Center.

An additional health and fitness program offered to college employees is the state-sponsored CommonHealth program. While there is good faculty and staff participation in the medical screenings offered bi-annually on campus, the more common “wellness challenges” – available weekly, monthly or quarterly, at the college’s discretion – have lost employee interest to the point where the college’s Human Resource Office has ceased to request participation in the incentive-based challenges (M. Stinson, personal communication, February 1, 2002).

This low-level of employee participation in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs at Southwest Virginia Community College should be of concern to this state agency. At a time when health care insurance premiums and individual out-of-pocket health care expenses continue to increase, and when heart disease, hypertension, diabetes

and obesity continue to be the leading causes of premature death, employees should be strongly encouraged to regularly participate in health and fitness programs, and to adopt those lifestyle behaviors that will help them become healthy individuals and productive employees.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that determine the level of employee participation in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs at Southwest Virginia Community College. This study was undertaken to determine the specific types of health and fitness programs that should be sponsored to increase employee participation.

Research Goals

The following objectives have been established to guide this study:

1. Identify the level of employee participation in health and fitness programs sponsored by Southwest Virginia Community College.
2. Identify factors that determine the level of employee participation in health and fitness programs offered by Southwest Virginia Community College.
3. Identify types of health and fitness programs sponsored by other agencies, companies and organizations.
4. Identify methods of delivery of health and fitness programs sponsored by other agencies, companies and organizations.
5. Determine the specific types of health and fitness programs, and methods of delivery, that should be sponsored by Southwest Virginia Community

College to increase employee participation in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs.

Background and Significance

For many years, local, state, and federal agencies and organizations have provided reports to the general public about the health risks of smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, poor nutrition, and lack of regular physical activity. Some individuals have heeded these warnings, and some have not. In the early 1990s, the Commonwealth of Virginia's Department of Human Resource Management (2002) contracted with Continental Health Promotion, a professional wellness provider, to develop and maintain a wellness program for state employees, and the CommonHealth program was created. A bi-annual medical screening, which costs \$5 and provides a tee shirt to each participant, evaluates blood pressure, blood chemistry analysis, resting heart rate, and cholesterol levels. Employees complete a confidential health risk appraisal regarding medical history and personal lifestyle habits, including stress, exercise, nutrition, tobacco usage and home safety. This information is combined with the results of the medical screening to provide the employee a report that contains recommendations to improve health and lifestyle behaviors. A large number of employees participate in this event and take advantage of the opportunity to be provided with a health evaluation at a very low cost.

Initially, the CommonHealth program sponsored aerobic exercise classes on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College, with a required enrollment of 10 individuals. Employee participation could not be maintained at the acceptable level, however, and CommonHealth discontinued this exercise program. Consequently, Southwest Virginia Community College began to allow faculty and staff to attend, at no

cost, either credit or non-credit aerobics classes offered by the college. To date, employee participation in this physical fitness activity continues to be less than 10 individuals.

The CommonHealth program also offered incentive-based wellness challenges to all college employees. These wellness challenges required employees to walk, climb stairs, or perform a combination of physical activities within a prescribed period of time. The incentives for completing the challenges were plastic cups, towels, shoelaces, socks, and key chains. Initially, participation was good, but according to the college's Human Resource Office, employee participation has declined to the point where the Human Resource Office no longer requests that CommonHealth provide these incentive-based challenges to the employees of Southwest Virginia Community College (personal communication, February 1, 2002).

By invitation, CommonHealth regional representatives came to the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College to provide 30-60 minute workshops on a variety of health, safety and wellness topics. These workshops began at 3 p.m. and were offered as a program for the Classified Staff Association. Perhaps because of the affiliation with the Classified Staff Association, neither administrative nor teaching faculty attended these workshops, even though public invitations were issued to all employees. Again, employee participation in the CommonHealth sponsored workshops could not be maintained at an acceptable level, and the college's Human Resource Office reports a reluctance to request CommonHealth representatives to conduct the workshops (personal communication, February 1, 2002).

In 1997, several years after inception of the CommonHealth program, Southwest Virginia Community College opened a new facility on campus – the Community Center. This multi-purpose building provided weight-training facilities, two racquetball/walleyball courts, an aerobic/dance room, basketball court, indoor and outdoor climbing wall, tennis courts, an outdoor walking track, showers and lockers for the use of students, college staff and the community at-large. All college employees and students use the facility at no charge, while members of the community are required to pay one-credit-hour tuition per semester for use of the physical fitness amenities. Although no official records are kept, the percentage of college employees using the physical fitness amenities within the Community Center is low.

This lack of employee participation in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs at Southwest Virginia Community College comes at a time when —

- Obesity is recognized as the number one epidemic in America, with nearly half of Americans being overweight (Bartlein, 2001, p. 18).
- The United States Department of Health and Human Services has associated type 2 diabetes with obesity and inactivity (2002).
- “At least one-third of all cancers are attributable to poor diet, physical inactivity, and overweight” (Bal, 2001, p. 1).
- “Despite common knowledge that exercise is healthful, more than 60 percent of American adults are not regularly active, and 25 percent of the adult population are not active at all” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999, p. 10).

Of additional significance is the large percentage of baby-boomers in the nation who may be unaware that “...many of the diseases and disabling conditions associated

with aging can be prevented, postponed, or ameliorated with regular physical activity” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999, p. 233). In light of these alarming statistics, the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2001) has established a national initiative — Healthy People 2010 — to help increase the quality and years of healthy life for residents of the United States. The top three major health issues of this initiative are physical activity, overweight and obesity, and tobacco use (p. 1) — three issues that can be addressed by employee participation in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs.

Lack of employee participation in agency sponsored health and fitness programs persists across the country although the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2001) report that “the benefits of moderate physical activity are well known: lowered risk for heart attack and stroke, reducing weight, and improving mood...” and that “ ... physically active individuals had lower annual direct medical costs than did inactive people” (p. 1). In fact, “preventable health problems account for about 70 percent of the direct and associated costs of illness...” (Beadle, 1994, p. F9), and it is not difficult to believe that health care costs are often the most expensive component of an employee benefits package (Gebhardt & Crump, 1990, p. 263). For this reason, many agencies, companies, and organizations have made wellness programs a strategic part of their efforts to not only reduce major medical, outpatient hospital, and worker compensation costs, but to also improve worker morale and productivity, and decrease injuries, absenteeism, and turnover (p. 262). It is worthwhile to note that much research has shown “...favorable physiological, psychological, and financial impacts as a result of exercise and implementation of wellness programs in corporate settings” (Amtmann,

Evans & Powers, 2001, p. 5). Given these benefits to both employees and the agencies they work for, and in light of today's rising cost of health care for employers and employees, it would seem prudent for organizations to promote and support healthy lifestyle behaviors for all employees.

Based upon the reported benefits, it is reasonable to assume that consistent employee participation in the health and fitness programs offered at Southwest Virginia Community College would be advantageous to both employees and the agency. Employee health would be improved and health care costs reduced, and the agency would gain healthier, more productive employees. Although employee productivity is certainly linked to many more factors than physical fitness and good health, people generally feel good about themselves if they are healthy and physically fit, or if they have made marked progress toward a goal like weight reduction or smoking cessation. These factors tend to make for a more satisfied workforce, and individuals who are satisfied are likely to be more motivated (Betts, 1986, p. 46). Thus, in the face of increased health care insurance premiums for both the Commonwealth of Virginia and state employees, and in consideration of the multitude of scientific research reports concerning the importance of physical activity and healthy lifestyle choices, it would seem that the Commonwealth, its agencies, and the individual employees should be concerned with improving those lifestyle factors that could help reduce the costs of health care, and increase and improve individual lifespan.

Limitations

The study to identify factors that determine the level of employee participation in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs at Southwest Virginia Community College may be impacted by the following limitations:

1. Conceptually, the agency-sponsored health and fitness programs at Southwest Virginia Community College may differ in breadth and depth from other state agencies, or comparable companies and organizations, thus limiting the possible generalizations.
2. Methodologically, by the number of employees at Southwest Virginia Community College who are willing to participate in such a study, and who will give unbiased responses to the survey questions.

Assumptions

In the study to identify factors that determine the level of employee participation in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs at Southwest Virginia Community College, the researcher will assume that all employees of the college are aware of the health and fitness amenities and programs available to them free of charge, including the Community Center physical fitness facilities, and programs offered by CommonHealth.

The researcher will also conduct the study believing that —

- An increase in employee participation levels in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs may reduce the number of sick days, reduce individual out-of-pocket health care expenses, and improve morale.
- Large numbers of employees have misconceived beliefs about many health and fitness programs.

- Neither the Commonwealth of Virginia, nor Southwest Virginia Community College, fully recognizes the importance of a strong commitment to health and fitness programs for state employees.

Procedures

In the study to identify the factors that determine employee participation in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs at Southwest Virginia Community College, the researcher will prepare, and obtain administrative approval for, a confidential survey instrument to be distributed to all on-campus full-time and part-time employees of Southwest Virginia Community College. The questionnaire items will attempt to obtain the respondents' knowledge, values, preferences, attitudes and beliefs that will be necessary to determine those specific types of health and fitness programs, and methods of delivery, that should be sponsored by Southwest Virginia Community College to increase employee participation in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs.

Once obtained, the data will be tabulated, and compared to information from other companies, agencies, and organizations that a review of the literature provides. This comparison will identify those factors absent from the agency-sponsored health and fitness programs at Southwest Virginia Community College, and will enable the researcher to make recommendations to improve the agency-sponsored health and fitness programs in order to increase employee participation.

Definition of Terms

In the study to identify the factors that determine the level of employee participation in health and fitness programs at Southwest Virginia Community College,

the terms “health and fitness programs” or “wellness programs” may be used interchangeably, and may be defined as any of the following:

- “...On-site exercise, regular health screening, health education, or changes in health-related behaviors outside work...” (Harrison & Liska, 1994, p. 47).
- “...Physical and lifestyle assessments, health education, activities that enhance behavioral change and methods to chart individual progress” (Archer, 2001, p. 47).
- “Smoking control, health-risk appraisals, back care, stress management, exercise, off-the-job accident prevention, nutrition education, high blood pressure control, and weight control” (Welter, 1988, p. 42).

Overview of Chapters

Chapter I provided an historical and current view of the health and fitness programs offered to employees of Southwest Virginia Community College, as well as the known and reported levels of employee participation in such programs. The continual increase in health care costs for both the Commonwealth of Virginia and individual employees, coupled with the plethora of scientific research identifying those individual lifestyle choices that help to maintain or improve mental and physical health were offered as strong incentives for the state and its agencies to support, and individual employees to adopt, healthy lifestyle behaviors.

Chapter II of this study will provide a review of the literature in order to support the need for a solution to the problem. A review of the literature will also identify components of health and fitness programs, and methods of delivery, that are offered by agencies, companies, or organizations throughout the United States. Chapter III of the study will provide a discussion of the methods and procedures used to identify both the

level and determining factors of employee participation in health and fitness programs at Southwest Virginia Community College. The process of creating and distributing the instrument to gather the data will be examined. In Chapter IV, the data provided by the survey instrument will be presented and analyzed. Chapter V will provide a summary of the study, its findings, and the conclusions to be drawn from an analysis of the data. Recommendations to address the problem will also be presented in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The second chapter of the study to identify factors that determine the level of employee participation in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs at Southwest Virginia Community College will focus upon a review of the literature regarding the types of health and fitness programs sponsored by agencies, companies and organizations throughout the United States. This review of the literature will help to identify characteristics of wellness programs that have been successful, which is to say, those programs in which a large percentage of employees participated over an extended period of time. The methods of delivery of other health and fitness programs will also be identified in this review of the literature in order that a composite view of other wellness programs can be used to support the researcher's recommendations at the conclusion of the study.

Types of Health and Fitness Programs

A review of the literature revealed a myriad of health and fitness programs, or wellness programs, offered to employees at agencies, companies, and organizations around the nation. Many programs were initiated as a means to reduce organizational health care costs, and companies used either internal staff or external contractors to develop and implement wellness programs. Low employee participation, however, especially in the physical fitness components, presented a challenge for all wellness programs in this review of the literature.

Many large organizations constructed fitness centers at the worksite specifically for the use of employees, while other companies offered employees use of fitness

facilities away from the worksite with a portion, or all, of the membership fees paid as a benefit of the wellness program. Employees attended fitness centers after work hours, or during work hours so long as time was made up (Rudman & Steinhardt, 1988, p. 7), but those companies who did have on-site fitness centers found that employees who took a break during the workday to exercise had better morale, productivity and physical health (Reese, 1999, p. 18). Gebhardt and Crump (1990) reported that the presence of an on-site fitness center had a positive impact on the attitude of both employees who used the fitness center and those who did not, because it represented a positive, caring attitude toward employees by the company (p. 268). It must be noted however, that fitness centers were reported to have "...the stigma of only being used by fit people" (Betts, 1986, p. 49), which may explain why some individuals do not engage in physical activities in a public arena. This phenomenon is supported by Shephard's (1996) report that the availability of fitness centers at the worksite was no guarantee of employee adoption of physically active behavior (p. 441). Where fitness centers were not provided, organizations found other means to engage employees in physical activities — "company sponsored sport teams, corporate challenges and charity marathons" (University of Calgary, 2002, p. 2) — and group activity classes in aerobic dance, low back exercise or calisthenics, and even on-site Weight Watchers classes were offered at some organizations (Reese, 2001, p. 47).

In addition to the physical fitness aspect, many wellness programs implemented preventive care programs to educate employees about their health and encourage positive lifestyle choices (Johnson & Abresch, 2001, p. 46). Many worksites offered programs concerning nutrition, exercise, smoking cessation, and weight control at regular intervals

throughout the year to afford all employees the opportunity to participate (Lunzer, 1987, p. Z12). It is those programs designed specifically to address the unique needs and interests of a particular workforce, however, that "...will have the greatest likelihood of succeeding in terms of getting behavior changes and showing results" (Atkinson, 2001, p. 71).

Reducing health care costs was a primary focus of most wellness programs, and those with proven reduced health care costs included health risk screening and education, physiological testing, and risk-specific programs focusing on fitness, weight reduction, nutrition and smoking cessation (Gebhardt & Crump, 1990, p. 266). It must be noted however, that "...savings in health care costs clearly depend on individual improvements in health" (Harrison & Liska, 1994, p. 48). It is the individual's role as a participant in wellness programs that determines achievement of the program goals for both the employee and the sponsoring agency. No matter the type of physical fitness or health education activities offered, without consistent individual participation, neither the employee nor the company will reap the rewards. Much of the "literature focusing on the lack of participation of workers in worksite health promotion programs reports that the organizational climate as well as personal health characteristics need to be considered to increase participation" (Bagwell & Bush, 2000, p. 69), and regardless of whether the physical fitness amenities are at the worksite or not, all employee wellness programs should "...emphasize prevention and improved quality of life through a heightened awareness of personal health behaviors" (Gebhardt & Crump, 1990, p. 263) if they are to benefit the employee as well as the sponsoring agency, company, or organization.

In a review of worksite fitness and health promotion programs during the 15 year span of 1973-88, Gebhardt and Crump (1990) found three functional levels of wellness programs. Level I programs focus on employee awareness and "...include newsletters, health fairs, screening sessions, posters, flyers, and/or educational classes" (p. 263). Level II programs are offered on an on-going basis and focus on employee lifestyle or behavior modification in order to bring about long-term effects and the formation of new habits, and include self-administered physical fitness activities and fitness center participation (p. 263). Annual education campaigns to target specific risk factors such as cigarette use, cholesterol levels, blood pressure, and weight control (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999, p. 229) are also included at this level.

Level III programs attempt to create an environment that supports employees in their efforts to maintain a healthy lifestyle, and include convenient worksite fitness centers, and healthy food choices in all worksite food areas (Gebhardt & Crump, 1990, p. 263). Low calorie food selection in the cafeteria and vending machines is an administrative commitment that represents an environmental focus on healthy lifestyle choices (Bartlein, 2001, p. 10). Flexible working hours is another environmental support, and gives employees a sense of freedom to participate in exercise or health education classes during the workday without taking work time away from the employer (University of Calgary, 2001, p. 1). Additional elements of a Level III program – prevention and self-care handbooks and videos, regular workshops, websites, and a telephone advice line – are all aimed at helping employees take responsibility for their health (Cerrato, 1995, p. 24).

If one were to view all types of health and fitness programs in this review of the literature as components of either Level I, II or III programs as described by Gebhardt and Crump (1990), one would find that Level I programs include those initial efforts that introduce an agency-sponsored wellness program to employees. A constant barrage of printed material at the workplace would indicate the company's support of and commitment to the program, create visibility for the program, and help wellness to become part of the corporate culture (Cerrato, 1995, p. 24). There is a plethora of fitness and wellness materials, and lectures free of charge from the American Red Cross, American Heart Association, and American Lung Association (Betts, 1986, p. 49), among others, to be used at this introductory level. A Level I program would also include signs posted at the elevators that encourage individuals to take the stairs, weekly health newsletters and electronic communication (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999, p. 223).

Level II programs include "...bimonthly workday seminars on topics such as stress management, family nutrition, healthy parenting, ...and weight management" (Abresch, Johnson, & Abresch, 2001, p. 45). Additionally, there are workplace wellness programs that have taken a holistic view of health, incorporating mental, physical and spiritual elements into the program, and developing a multi-faceted approach that addresses "...physical activity levels, stress, nutrition, illness prevention and work-life balance issues..." (Huhtala, 2001, p. 11). In today's workplace, with Internet access at the desktop, many companies support employee access to online health programs as an extension of the wellness program. Health care information, personalized health risk assessments, and live support from a health care professional are elements of a wellness

program afforded by information technology (Elswick, 2000, p. 1) that do not require an employee to be physically away from their work for health education classes.

Those wellness programs categorized as Level III have the goal of providing a workplace environment conducive to healthy lifestyle behaviors. At this level individuals are well aware of the administrative commitment to employee health and wellness, and can enjoy a work environment that supports good health habits (Cerrato, 1995, p. 26). Level III programs are especially important given that “employers are among our only social institutions able to consistently command the attention of adults and to furnish powerful incentives for people to change their behavior” (Beadle, 1994, p. F9). The role of the workplace as an environment that supports healthy lifestyle choices is crucial when one considers that the majority of individuals spend at least one-third of each day at the workplace, often in sedentary jobs. This environment becomes an important element in incorporating health and fitness activities into individual lifestyles, and if they so desire, companies “...can make changes in the environment to help convey physical activity as an organizational norm” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999, p. 229). As a captive audience for other ideas, policies or issues that an organization wants to promote — OSHA safety standards, charitable causes, new products — wellness programs at the worksite have the potential to reach a large percentage of the workforce population, and make a positive impact on employee health.

Methods of Delivery for Health and Fitness Programs

Research has shown that employee health is most often improved and employee participation is most often sustained in those programs which are structured with defined goals and objectives, have staff to instruct and provide counseling, include regular

program evaluation, and focus on recruitment of non-participants (Gebhardt & Crump, 1990, p. 269). Additionally, “it is vital for companies to include employee input into their health and fitness programs. When employees are given the opportunity to voice their concerns or suggestions, they invest something into the program, which spurs excitement and participation” (University of Calgary, 2002, p. 1).

Incentives play a large role in maintaining employee participation in health and fitness programs, and have proven to be effective when awarded for individual goal achievement such as attendance at exercise, nutrition and health education classes, or reduction in blood pressure or cholesterol levels. Incentives are especially important when directed toward at-risk employees (Gebhardt & Crump, 1990, p. 270) — those individuals who smoke, are overweight, and are sedentary. It is important to note, however, that while extrinsic rewards, such as receiving social recognition and encouragement, and receiving tee shirts, pins or certificates, may increase employee participation in health and fitness programs, it is the intrinsic rewards — increased self-efficacy and a feeling of accomplishment — that will lead an individual to a long-term commitment to healthy lifestyle behaviors (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 1999, p. 213).

Employee participation has also been related to differences in education and cultural backgrounds, and for many individuals, resistance to change is an attitude that can adversely impact participation in a health and fitness program (Gebhardt & Crump, 1990, p. 269). People become comfortable in old habits, and resist external efforts to modify their lifestyle behaviors. For this reason, wellness program staffs play an important role in developing strategies aimed at creating internal motivation, which will

alter employee attitude and behavior toward wellness programs (p. 269). According to Harrison and Liska (1994), it is important to develop motivational strategies to attract and retain wellness program participants, but especially those with high health risks since a reduction in health care costs is often an organizational goal (p. 48), and "...a very small percentage change in exercise habits might translate to considerable...medical cost benefits" (McAuley, Courneya, Rudolph & Lox, 1994, p. 504).

Unfortunately, studies have revealed that a large percentage of at-risk employees are not participating in health and fitness programs. Employees who need the health education and physical activity the most are not partaking of the opportunity to improve their lifestyle behavior, and present a constant challenge to agencies, companies and organizations who implement wellness programs in an effort to reduce health care costs. Employees, who are overweight, have high blood pressure and high cholesterol are at risk for coronary heart disease, stroke, and diabetes, and are the employees, who in the majority of companies, account for the bulk of health care costs (Cerrato, 1995, p. 22). It is especially important to structure wellness programs to target these at-risk employees since Harrison and Liska's (1994) research showed that those employees with the highest health risks perceived greater work and health related barriers to participation in a health and fitness program (p. 47). Often they blame other individuals (family members), events (scheduling conflicts), or the environment (workload) for their lack of success in changing their lifestyle behavior (p. 48). The tendency to attribute blame to external factors, rather than accept personal responsibility, tends to build upon itself as these individuals practice fewer healthy lifestyle behaviors, which leads to more health-related ailments, which increases the perception of barriers. These perceptions and resulting

behaviors impact negatively upon an individual's physical health and create a downward spiral to poor health and exorbitant health care costs (p. 53). Organizational intervention and support in the form of on-site fitness centers, released time to exercise or attend health education classes, healthy food choices at the cafeteria or in vending machines, and recognition for goal attainment are elements of a wellness program that could help reduce the perceived work-related barriers for all employees (p. 60).

Harrison and Liska (1994) also suggest the use of goal-setting techniques as a method to increase employee motivation to participate in health and fitness programs (p. 48). Setting goals for health and fitness program participation is similar to setting job-related goals in that the tasks must be attractive (rewarded) and the employee must feel they are capable of completing the task (self-efficacy) (p. 48). Linking physical activity goal commitment and attainment to work-related rewards and outcomes was shown by Harrison and Liska to have a positive impact on employee participation in health and fitness programs. Incentives, flex time, and social recognition are examples of the work-related rewards and outcomes that were coupled with "...a variety of health improvement strategies, one-to-one outreach and follow-up counseling" (p. 62) to improve employee participation. This motivational strategy also helped to address the lack-of-ability perceptions that many at-risk employees possess. It is important, however, that a wellness program manager have the ability or the resources to design physical fitness and health related goals into a succession of small steps that the at-risk employee can achieve, which will ultimately lead to a change in their lifestyle behaviors (p. 62). Admittedly, behavior modification is a complex endeavor, and may be beyond the expertise of many lay wellness program managers. Nevertheless, changing lifestyle behaviors is an

essential element of a successful wellness program, and is one component of a multidisciplinary approach to developing a wellness program, which at some level should include individuals with specialized knowledge in exercise science, psychology, risk management and medicine (Gebhardt & Crump, 1990, p. 269).

Shephard (1996) reports that the most effective wellness programs "...combined ready access to a fitness facility with a vigorous outreach program, personal counseling, and organizational change facilitating exercise at the worksite" (p. 447). The one-on-one counseling and follow-up is especially crucial to help those individuals with low motivation, negative attitudes, or personal conflicts establish a long-term commitment to healthy behaviors. Assistance with coping skills and goal setting, reinforcement of positive behaviors to prevent relapse, and regular reminders provides much needed social support for the at-risk individual and can help to increase their self-confidence (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999, p. 217).

This review of the literature revealed that not only individual behaviors must be changed, but that the sociocultural and physical environment must be changed as well (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999, p. 214), if workplace wellness programs are to be successful in helping individual employees adopt healthy lifestyle behaviors. Individual employee participation in health and fitness programs alone is not enough, and is a challenge in and of itself. For a wellness program to succeed, the environment must be "...conducive to the promotion of a healthy lifestyle" (Amtmann, Evans, & Powers, 2001, p. 2). The workplace environment presents a tremendous opportunity to create positive changes in employees' lifestyle choices. It is imperative that the social and environmental influences at the workplace become more health

conscious in order to provide an environment where employees are supported in healthy lifestyle behaviors. “Federal, state, and local governments, along with private and public organizations, should all work together to create a social and physical environment that will make it easier for people to be active and eat right...” (American Cancer Society, 2001, p. 2). This broad perspective recognizes the influence of the physical and social environment (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999, p. 244) – whether for good or bad – upon individuals.

Summary

The second chapter of the study to identify factors that determine the level of employee participation in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs at Southwest Virginia Community College provided a review of the literature regarding the types, and methods of delivery, of health and fitness programs sponsored by agencies, companies, and organizations throughout the United States. Free or low-cost fitness centers, regularly scheduled health education seminars and risk-specific workshops, group physical fitness activities, and easy access to written and electronic wellness information were elements of most wellness programs. Consistently low employee participation, especially in the physical fitness components of wellness programs, presented a challenge to all organizations. This problem was addressed by structuring programs to meet specific needs and interests of a particular workforce, providing incentives and social recognition, allowing released time or flexible working hours to exercise or attend health education seminars, and offering one-on-one counseling.

This review of the literature revealed at-risk employees to be a segment of the workforce population specifically targeted by wellness programs, inasmuch as reducing

health care costs was an organizational goal for many of the programs. With at-risk employees often accounting for the majority of health care expenses, it was suggested that development of behavior modification strategies to reduce perceived work and health related barriers to participation in a wellness program would benefit both the employee and the agency.

Much of the literature reviewed suggested that a change in the organizational environment is key to successful and consistent employee participation in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs. The social and physical influences of the workplace environment have both a subtle and tangible impact upon employees, and if the environment, or organizational norm, incorporated and supported healthy lifestyle choices, both individuals and the company would benefit.

Chapter III of this study will examine the methods and procedures used to identify both the level and determining factors of employee participation in health and fitness programs at Southwest Virginia Community College. Selection of the sample population, construction of the questionnaire, and the process of data collection will also be discussed.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The study to identify factors that determine employee participation in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs at Southwest Virginia Community College was a survey study. As such, a questionnaire was used to obtain respondents' knowledge, values, preferences, attitudes, and beliefs regarding those specific types of health and fitness programs, and methods of delivery, that should be sponsored by Southwest Virginia Community College to increase employee participation. An analysis of the data collected will enable the researcher to make recommendations regarding the agency's health and fitness program. Chapter III will also discuss population selection and characteristics, instrument design, and methods of data collection.

Population

The full-time and part-time on-campus employees of Southwest Virginia Community College were the group selected for this study. Inasmuch as this was the local population to be directly impacted by the recommendations of the study, it is pertinent, as well as convenient and economical, to select these individuals for participation in the survey.

This population consisted of 50 twelve-month administrative faculty, 64 nine-month teaching faculty, 64 full-time classified employees, and 42 part-time employees, for a total population of 220. There were 92 men and 128 women, and 99 percent of the population was white. Much of the population (61.4 percent) was of the "baby-boom" generation, which is to say, they were born between the years of 1946-1964 (Bram, 1998,

p. 1), and at the time of the study were between the ages of 38 and 56, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Age Of Population

	18-24 years	25-37 years	38-56 years	Age 57 years and over
Number of Employees	6	36	135	43

Instrument

In order to identify the level of employee participation in health and fitness programs sponsored by Southwest Virginia Community College, and to identify factors that determine the level of employee participation in such programs, a survey instrument (Appendix A) was developed. This instrument requested minimal personal characteristic information – age and employment classification only – to retain the anonymity of the respondents, and consisted of a series of ten open and closed questions.

The survey questions were designed to gather information in two areas beyond that of age and employment classification –

1. Level of employee participation in health and fitness programs sponsored by Southwest Virginia Community College, and
2. Factors that determine the level of employee participation in such programs.

Open form questions were used to obtain a greater depth of response for those survey items pertaining to the factors that determine the level of employee participation, while closed form questions were used to measure the level of participation. Although responses to the open form questions will be more difficult to tabulate and summarize, these responses were necessary to identify participation determinants, which will assist the researcher in making recommendations regarding the types of health and fitness programs, and methods of delivery, that should be sponsored in order to increase employee participation.

Methods of Data Collection

After receiving approval of the Old Dominion University Occupational and Technical Studies Program Director and Human Subjects Review Committee, and of the Southwest Virginia Community College President and Human Resources Officer, the survey instrument, along with a cover letter (Appendix B), was distributed via inter-office mail to all on-campus twelve-month administrative faculty, nine-month teaching faculty, full-time classified employees, and part-time employees of Southwest Virginia Community College. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was not provided to those employees on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College, given that inter-office envelopes were readily available for respondents' use in returning the survey instrument. Several nine-month teaching faculty were not on campus at the time the survey was distributed, however, which required the survey to be mailed to their home with a self-addressed, stamped envelope included for return of the survey instrument.

Each survey instrument was numbered for tracking purposes only. All completed instruments were kept in a secure, off-campus location during the study, and were destroyed after the study was complete.

One week after the survey instrument was distributed, a follow-up electronic mail message was sent to all members of the population group. After the questionnaire due date, the survey responses that had been returned were tabulated and summarized. The results were then analyzed to help determine recommendations of the specific types, and methods of delivery, of health and fitness programs that Southwest Virginia Community College should sponsor in order to increase employee participation.

Statistical Analysis

The Likert scale was used for many of the questionnaire items. These responses were tabulated using frequency and median or mean scores. Answers to the open-ended questions were also reported. These responses were extremely important for the researcher to use in development of the recommendations reported in the final chapter of the research study.

Summary

Chapter III has explained the methods and procedures by which a survey instrument was developed and distributed in order to obtain the information necessary to continue with this descriptive study. The population to be surveyed was described by age, sex, race, and employment classification, and was selected on the basis of pertinence, convenience, and economics. Chapter IV of this research study will reveal the findings of the survey and will identify both the level of employee participation in health and fitness programs and factors that determined this level.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that determine the level of employee participation in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs at Southwest Virginia Community College. This study was undertaken to determine the specific types of health and fitness programs that should be sponsored to increase employee participation.

The following objectives were established to guide this study:

1. Identify the level of employee participation in health and fitness programs sponsored by Southwest Virginia Community College.
2. Identify factors that determine the level of employee participation in health and fitness programs offered by Southwest Virginia Community College.
3. Identify types of health and fitness programs sponsored by other agencies, companies and organizations.
4. Identify methods of delivery of health and fitness programs sponsored by other agencies, companies and organizations.
5. Determine the specific types of health and fitness programs, and methods of delivery, that should be sponsored by Southwest Virginia Community College to increase employee participation in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs.

The full-time and part-time on-campus employees of Southwest Virginia Community College were the group selected for this study. Inasmuch as this was the local population to be directly impacted by the recommendations of the study, it was

pertinent, as well as convenient and economical to select those individuals for participation in the survey.

The population consisted of 50 twelve-month administrative faculty, 64 nine-month teaching faculty, 64 full-time classified employees, and 42 part-time employees, for a total population of 220. In the population, there were 92 men and 128 women, 99 percent was white, and more than 60 percent of the population was of the baby boom generation – being between the ages of 38 and 56 at the time of the survey. Of the 220 survey instruments that were distributed, 154 were returned. This chapter will provide a graphic and narrative report of the results of the survey, including the survey participants' responses to the two open-ended questions contained in the instrument.

Overview of Responses

Of the 220 survey instruments distributed, 154 were returned, which was a response rate of 70 percent. Table 2 provides the response rate for each of the four categories of survey participants, where it can be seen that the response rate for both twelve-month administrative faculty and full-time classified employees was good, while that of nine-month teaching faculty and part-time employees was fair.

As previously reported, more than 60 percent of the population was of the baby-boom generation. Table 3 provides an overview of the response rate for the four age categories to which each respondent belonged. While the response rate for three of the four age categories was normal, the youngest segment of the population choose not to participate in the survey.

Table 2
Participant Response Rates By Employment Category

Category	Number Distributed	Number Received	Response Rate
Twelve-month Administrative Faculty	50	38	76%
Nine-month Teaching Faculty	64	41	64%
Full-time Classified Employees	64	51	80%
Part-time Employees	42	24	57%

Table 3
Participant Response Rates By Age Category

Category	Number Distributed	Number Received	Response Rate
Between 18-24 years	6	0	0%
Between 25-37 years	36	28	78%
Between 38-56 years	135	89	66%
Age 57 years and over	43	36	84%

Level of Participation in Health and Fitness Programs

The section of the survey pertaining to the state-sponsored CommonHealth program contained three closed questions using a Likert scale response, and one open question requesting comments regarding the CommonHealth incentive-based wellness challenges, and health, safety and wellness meetings. Tables 4, 5, and 6 provide the

response rates for each of the three closed questions pertaining to the CommonHealth program. It should be noted that not all response percentages equal 100 percent due to the fact that not all participants selected a response for each question. All mean and median scores were based on assigning a value to the Likert scale items as follows: never-5, rarely-4, sometimes-3, often-2, and always-1.

Table 4

Participation In The CommonHealth Incentive-Based Wellness Challenges

<u>Response</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>	<u>Percentage of Responses</u>
Never	36	23%
Rarely	27	17%
Sometimes	52	34%
Often	33	21%
Always	4	3%

The mean response to “Do you participate in CommonHealth incentive-based wellness challenges?” at 3.4 is sometimes, which indicates that employees of Southwest Virginia Community College do not participate in the CommonHealth wellness challenges on a regular basis. Based on the responses to the open-ended questions (as shown in Appendix C), employees participate in the challenges when they have an interest in the health, safety or wellness topics.

Table 5

CommonHealth Incentive-Based Wellness Challenges Help To Improve Existing Or Acquire New Healthy Lifestyle Behaviors

<u>Response</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>	<u>Percentage of Responses</u>
Never	20	13%
Rarely	21	14%
Sometimes	58	38%
Often	40	26%
Always	4	3%

The mean response to “Do you feel that the CommonHealth incentive-based wellness challenges help you to improve existing or acquire new healthy lifestyle behaviors?” at 3.1 is sometimes, which indicates that employees of Southwest Virginia Community College feel that at least part of the time, but not in every instance, the CommonHealth incentive-based wellness challenges help to improve their existing lifestyle behaviors, or help them to acquire new health lifestyle behaviors.

The mean response to the survey question pertaining to attendance at CommonHealth meetings is 3.65, and falls between sometimes and rarely. This finding supports the report of the Southwest Virginia Community College Human Resource Office that attendance had declined to the point where they were reluctant to request CommonHealth representatives to conduct the health, safety, and wellness workshops on campus.

Table 6

Attendance At CommonHealth Meetings

<u>Response</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>	<u>Percentage of Responses</u>
Never	44	29%
Rarely	36	23%
Sometimes	48	31%
Often	20	13%
Always	3	2%

Table 7 provides an overview of the responses to those Likert scale items pertaining to individual participation in physical activities both on and away from the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College. The median score was provided for the majority of the items in this table given that many of the responses were not evenly distributed along the Likert scale.

Table 7

Engagement In Physical Activities On The SVCC Campus

Weight Room

<u>Response</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>	<u>Percentage of Responses</u>
Never	63	41%
Rarely	43	28%
Sometimes	27	18%
Often	11	7%
Always	8	5%

The median response (76) to participation in physical activities at the Weight Room is rarely, which according to the definitions set forth on the survey instrument means once or twice a year. The large number of responses to both never and rarely certainly supports the median response that the employees of Southwest Virginia Community College rarely use the weight training equipment in the Weight Room.

Racquetball/Walleyball Courts

<u>Response</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>	<u>Percentage of Responses</u>
Never	113	73%
Rarely	22	14%
Sometimes	15	10%
Often	2	1%
Always	2	1%

The median response (77) to employee use the Racquetball/Walleyball Courts is never and is further supported by the large percentage of respondents who selected that answer.

Aerobic/Dance Room

<u>Response</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>	<u>Percentage of Responses</u>
Never	115	75%
Rarely	19	12%
Sometimes	11	7%
Often	4	3%
Always	4	3%

The median response (76.5) to employee use of the Aerobic/Dance Room is never and is further supported by the large percentage of employees who reported that they never use this physical fitness amenity within the Community Center.

Basketball Court

<u>Response</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>	<u>Percentage of Responses</u>
Never	117	76%
Rarely	23	15%
Sometimes	11	7%
Often	1	1%
Always	0	0

The median response (76) of employees to use of the Basketball Court is never and is supported by the large percentage of respondents that report they never use the Basketball Court to participate in physical fitness activities.

Indoor/Outdoor Climbing Wall

<u>Response</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>	<u>Percentage of Responses</u>
Never	145	94%
Rarely	5	3%
Sometimes	1	1%
Often	0	0
Always	1	1%

The median response (76) to use of the Indoor/Outdoor Climbing Wall is never and the 94 percent of respondents who selected this answer indicate that the employees of Southwest Virginia Community College almost never use this physical fitness amenity at the Community Center.

Tennis Courts

<u>Response</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>	<u>Percentage of Responses</u>
Never	125	81%
Rarely	19	12%
Sometimes	8	5%
Often	0	0
Always	0	0

The median response (76) to use of the Tennis Courts as a means of participation in physical fitness activities is never, which indicates that the majority of employees of Southwest Virginia Community College do not use the campus tennis courts to participate in this sport.

Outdoor Walking Track

<u>Response</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>	<u>Percentage of Responses</u>
Never	50	30%
Rarely	36	23%
Sometimes	46	30%
Often	16	10%
Always	4	3%

The responses to use of the Outdoor Walking Track were more evenly distributed; thus the mean of the responses was calculated to be 3.74, which falls between sometimes and rarely. This indicates that the Outdoor Walking Track does serve as a means of physical fitness activity more often than those amenities mentioned previously, and the 53 percent of employees who responded rarely or sometimes supports this finding.

Participation In Physical Fitness Activities Away From The SVCC Campus

<u>Response</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>	<u>Percentage of Responses</u>
Never	11	7%
Rarely	16	10%
Sometimes	46	30%
Often	45	29%
Always	34	22%

Responses to the question pertaining to participation in physical fitness activities away from the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College were evenly distributed; thus the mean was calculated. At 2.51, the mean falls between the responses often and sometimes, which indicates that, on the average, the employees of Southwest Virginia Community College do engage in physical fitness activities away from the college campus.

Table 8 provides an overview of responses to survey question 9 regarding physical activities engaged in once a week or more away from the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College, and allowed for a selection of six items, as well as the option of providing comments. The physical activities offered as a selection were walking, dancing, bicycling, yard work, running, aerobics, and other.

Table 8

Engagement In Physical Activities Away From The SVCC Campus

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>	<u>Percentage of Responses</u>
Walking	124	81%
Dancing	5	3%
Bicycling	25	16%
Yard Work	111	72%
Running	17	11%
Aerobics	12	8%
Other	36	23%

Activities listed in the comments, or other, section of question 9 on the survey instrument as being engaged in, once a week or more, away from the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College are shown in Table 9. These activities include the sports of golf, swimming, basketball, softball, volleyball, bowling, and racquetball. Respondents also engaged in roller blading, hiking, climbing, kayaking, yoga, kickboxing, horseback riding, fishing and weight training. Additional activities were gardening, farming, cutting wood, and home maintenance and remodeling.

Table 9

List Of Physical Activities Engaged In Away From The SVCC Campus

Chasing grandson	Golf	Swimming	Roller blading
Hiking	Climbing	Kayaking	Yoga
Stationary bicycle	Light hand weights	Weight training	Home maintenance
Remodeling	Bowling	Horseback riding	Gardening
Kickboxing	Racquetball	Farming	Exercise machine
Basketball	Flying	Fishing	Cutting wood
Softball	Volleyball		

Determinants of Participation in Health and Fitness Programs

Appendix C lists the comments provided to the open-ended question regarding the CommonHealth incentive-based wellness challenges, and health, safety and wellness meetings. These comments provide insight into the reasons why the employees of Southwest Virginia Community College sometimes participate in the CommonHealth incentive-based wellness challenges; why employees feel that the CommonHealth wellness challenges sometimes help to improve existing lifestyle behaviors or acquire new healthy lifestyle behaviors; and why employees rarely attend CommonHealth meetings. The most frequent response provided by the employees regarding the CommonHealth programs was a lack of time to either participate in the challenges or to attend the meetings. Many favorable comments about the CommonHealth program were provided, however, which indicates that the employees of Southwest Virginia Community College consider the program to be worthwhile. Additional comments

addressed the duplication of CommonHealth health, safety, and wellness topics, and the desire for a greater variety of topics from which to choose.

The last question on the survey instrument requested the reasons prohibiting engagement in physical activities at the Community Center or elsewhere on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College, gave respondents a choice of seven answers and an area for comments. Table 10 provides an overview of the responses to Question 10 of the survey instrument.

Table 10

Reasons Prohibiting Engagement In Physical Fitness Activities On The SVCC Campus

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>	<u>Percentage of Responses</u>
Not enough time	97	63%
Personal obligations	51	33%
Nothing appeals to me	6	4%
Family obligations	64	42%
Personal health reasons	12	8%
Not interested in exercising	5	3%
Other	18	12%

Based on the responses as shown in Table 10, a large percentage of the employees of Southwest Virginia Community College feel there is not enough time while they are on campus to participate in physical fitness activities. Additionally, many have family and personal obligations that prohibit spending extra time on campus in order to engage in physical fitness activities.

More detailed reasons provided by the respondents that prohibit engagement in physical fitness activities at the Community Center or elsewhere on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College are listed in Appendix D. Many of the comments pertain to a lack of time during the workday, and the extra effort required to come to work early or stay late in order to participate in physical fitness activities. Several respondents expressed a preference to engage in physical fitness activities at home, or in a setting apart from the workplace. Respondents also cited commute time as a barrier to participating in physical fitness activities on the SVCC campus.

Summary

The survey instrument developed to identify the level of employee participation in health and fitness programs sponsored by Southwest Virginia Community College, and to identify factors that determine the level of employee participation in such programs, was distributed to 220 on-campus employees of Southwest Virginia Community College. This population consisted of 50 twelve-month administrative faculty, 64 nine-month teaching faculty, 64 full-time classified employees, and 42 part-time employees. There were 92 men and 128 women in this population group. Ninety-nine percent of the population was white, and 61.4 percent of the population was of the baby boom generation, being between the ages of 38 and 56 at the time of the study.

Of the 220 survey instruments that were distributed, 154 were returned, for a response rate of 70 percent. The response rate for both twelve-month administrative faculty (76 percent) and full-time classified employees (80 percent) was good, while that of nine-month teaching faculty (64 percent) and part-time employees (57 percent) was fair. The response rate according to age group was good for those participants between

25-37 years (78 percent) and age 57 years and over (84 percent). The response rate for those participants of the baby-boom generation, between 38-56 years was fair (66 percent); however, the youngest age group, 18-24 years, had no participants respond to the survey.

This chapter set forth the data collected from the 154 survey respondents who provided answers to three closed and one open question pertaining to the state-sponsored CommonHealth program, and two closed and two open questions regarding engagement in physical fitness activities both on and away from the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College. Chapter V of this research study will provide a summary of the study, draw conclusions based upon the data collected, and make recommendations based upon the results of the study.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research study was conducted to identify factors that determine employee participation in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs at Southwest Virginia Community College. The study was undertaken to determine the specific types of health and fitness programs that should be sponsored to increase employee participation. This fifth and final chapter will provide a summary of the research study, including problem identification and significance, the goals and objectives, the limitations of the study, the population group, the methods and procedures used in data collection, and an analysis of the data collected. Conclusions drawn from the data collected will be presented, along with recommendations based upon the results of the study. Recommendations for future studies will also be presented in this chapter.

Summary

This research study was conducted to identify factors that determine employee participation in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs at Southwest Virginia Community College. The study was undertaken to determine the specific types of health and fitness programs that should be sponsored to increase employee participation.

The following objectives were established to guide this study:

1. Identify the level of employee participation in health and fitness programs sponsored by Southwest Virginia Community College.
2. Identify factors that determine the level of employee participation in health and fitness programs offered by Southwest Virginia Community College.

3. Identify types of health and fitness programs sponsored by other agencies, companies and organizations.
4. Identify methods of delivery of health and fitness programs sponsored by other agencies, companies and organizations.
5. Determine the specific types of health and fitness programs, and methods of delivery, that should be sponsored by Southwest Virginia Community College to increase employee participation in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs.

This problem was deemed to be significant because of the low percentage of college employees using the physical fitness amenities within the Community Center or elsewhere on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College. Of additional consideration was that more than 60 percent of the employees of Southwest Virginia Community College were of the baby-boom generation, which is to say, they were between the ages of 38 and 56 years at the time of the study. This set of circumstances, coupled with overwhelming support for healthy lifestyle behaviors that a review of the literature revealed, provided the impetus for this research study.

The study to identify factors that determine the level of employee participation in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs at Southwest Virginia Community College was impacted by the following limitations:

1. Conceptually, the agency-sponsored health and fitness programs at Southwest Virginia Community College may differ in breadth and depth from other state agencies, or comparable companies and organizations, thus limiting the possible generalizations.

2. Methodologically, by the number of employees at Southwest Virginia Community College who were willing to participate in such a study, and who gave unbiased responses to the survey questions.

The full-time and part-time on-campus employees of Southwest Virginia Community College were the group selected for this study. Inasmuch as this was the local population to be directly impacted by the recommendations of the study, it was pertinent, as well as convenient and economical, to select these individuals for participation in the survey.

This population consisted of 50 twelve-month administrative faculty, 64 nine-month teaching faculty, 64 full-time classified employees, and 42 part-time employees, for a total population of 220. There were 92 men and 128 women, and 99 percent of the population was white. Much of the population (61.4 percent) was of the “baby-boom” generation, which is to say, they were born between the years of 1946-1964 (Bram, 1998, p. 1), and at the time of the study were between the ages of 38 and 56 years.

In order to identify the level of employee participation in health and fitness programs sponsored by Southwest Virginia Community College, and to identify factors that determine the level of employee participation in such programs, a survey instrument was developed. The first two questions on the survey were closed, and pertained to the employment category and age of the respondents. The section of the survey pertaining to the state-sponsored CommonHealth program contained three closed questions using a Likert scale response, and one open question requesting comments regarding the CommonHealth incentive-based wellness challenges, and health, safety and wellness meetings.

The second section of the survey instrument consisted of two closed questions using a Likert scale response, and two questions allowing for selection among six responses each in addition to an open response. All of the items in this section of the survey instrument pertained to individual participation in physical activities either on or away from the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College, and the reasons that prohibited the respondents from engaging in physical activities on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College. This instrument requested minimal personal characteristic information – age and employment classification only – to retain the anonymity of the respondents, and consisted of a total of ten open and closed questions.

The survey questions were designed to gather information in two areas beyond that of age and employment classification –

1. Level of employee participation in health and fitness programs sponsored by Southwest Virginia Community College, and
2. Factors that determine the level of employee participation in such programs.

Open form questions were used to obtain a greater depth of response for those survey items pertaining to the factors that determine the level of employee participation, while closed form questions were used to measure the level of participation.

After receiving approval of the Old Dominion University Occupational and Technical Studies Program Director and Human Subjects Review Committee, and of the Southwest Virginia Community College President and Human Resources Officer, the survey instrument, along with a cover letter was distributed via inter-office mail to all on-campus employees of Southwest Virginia Community College. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was not provided given that the majority of the population was

contained on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College, and also given that inter-office envelopes were readily available for all respondents' use in returning the survey instrument. For those nine-month teaching faculty employees who were not working on-campus during the time of the survey, the survey instrument and a self-addressed, stamped envelope, was mailed to their home. Of the 220 survey instruments distributed, 154 were returned, which was a response rate of 70 percent.

The research study provided a graphic and narrative report of the results of the survey, including the survey participants' responses to the two open-ended questions contained in the instrument. The responses to the Likert-scaled, or close-ended questions were tabulated by total number of responses, percentage of responses, and mean or median response, and set forth in a series of tables. The comments provided for the three open-ended questions were summarized by frequency of response mode.

Conclusions

The survey instrument was designed to gather information pertaining to two of the research goals established to guide this study, and each is addressed individually.

- Identify the level of employee participation in health and fitness programs sponsored by Southwest Virginia Community College.

With regard to participation in the CommonHealth incentive-based wellness challenges, the data collected by the survey instrument revealed that 23 percent of survey respondents never participate, 17 percent rarely participate, 34 percent sometimes participate, 21 percent often participate and 3 percent always participate. The mean response to this question was sometimes, which indicated that employees of Southwest Virginia Community College do not participate in the CommonHealth wellness

challenges on a regular basis. Based on the responses to the open-ended questions, employees participate in the challenges when they have an interest in the health, safety or wellness topics.

With regard to attendance at CommonHealth meetings where a variety of health, safety, and wellness topics are discussed, the data collected revealed that 29 percent of survey respondents never participate, 23 percent rarely participate, 31 percent sometimes participate, 13 percent often participate and 2 percent always participate. The mean response to this question fell between sometimes and rarely, which supports the report of the Southwest Virginia Community College Human Resource Office of a reluctance to continue offering the CommonHealth incentive-based challenges and meetings due to poor participation and attendance by employees of the college. Factors influencing the respondents' decision not to participate in CommonHealth incentive-based challenges or meetings are set forth later in this chapter.

With regard to engagement in physical fitness activities at the amenities located within the Community Center or elsewhere on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College, the data collected revealed the following levels of participation:

Weight Room: 41 percent of survey respondents never participate, 28 percent rarely participate, 18 percent sometimes participate, 7 percent often participate and 5 percent always participate. The median response to participation in physical activities at the Weight Room is rarely, which according to the definitions set forth on the survey instrument means once or twice a year. The large number of responses to both answers never and rarely certainly supports the median response that the employees of Southwest

Virginia Community College rarely use the weight training equipment in the Weight Room.

Racquetball/Walleyball Courts: 73 percent of survey respondents never participate, 14 percent rarely participate, 10 percent sometimes participate, 1 percent often participates and 1 percent always participates. The median response to employee use the Racquetball/Walleyball Courts was never, and was further supported by the large percentage of respondents who selected that answer.

Aerobic/Dance Room: 75 percent of survey respondents never participate, 12 percent rarely participate, 7 percent sometimes participate, 3 percent often participate and 3 percent always participate. The median response to employee use of the Aerobic/Dance Room was never, and was further supported by the large percentage of employees who reported that they never use this physical fitness amenity within the Community Center.

Basketball Court: 76 percent of survey respondents never participate, 15 percent rarely participate, 7 percent sometimes participate, 1 percent often participates and 0 percent always participates. The median response of employees to use of the Basketball Court was never, and was supported by the large percentage of respondents that report they never use the Basketball Court to participate in physical fitness activities.

Indoor/Outdoor Climbing Wall: 94 percent of survey respondents never participate, 3 percent rarely participate, 1 percent sometimes participates, 0 percent often participates and 1 percent always participates. The median response to use of the Indoor/Outdoor Climbing Wall was never, and the 94 percent of respondents who

selected this answer indicate that the employees of Southwest Virginia Community College almost never use this physical fitness amenity at the Community Center.

Tennis Courts: 81 percent of survey respondents never participate, 12 percent rarely participate, 5 percent sometimes participate, 0 percent often participates and 0 percent always participates. The median response to use of the Tennis Courts as a means of participation in physical fitness activities was never, which indicates that the majority of employees of Southwest Virginia Community College do not use the campus tennis courts to participate in this sport.

Outdoor Walking Track: 30 percent of survey respondents never participate, 23 percent rarely participate, 30 percent sometimes participate, 10 percent often participate and 3 percent always participate. The responses to use of the Outdoor Walking Track were more evenly distributed; thus the mean of the responses was calculated to be 3.74, which falls between sometimes and rarely. This indicates that the Outdoor Walking Track does serve as a means of physical fitness activity more often than those physical fitness amenities mentioned previously, and the 53 percent of employees who responded rarely or sometimes supports this finding.

With regard to participation in physical fitness activities away from the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College, the data collected by the survey instrument revealed that 7 percent of survey respondents never participate, 10 percent rarely participate, 30 percent sometimes participate, 29 percent often participate and 22 percent always participate. Responses to the question pertaining to participation in physical fitness activities away from the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College were evenly distributed; thus the mean was calculated. At 2.51, the mean is between the

responses often and sometimes, which indicates that, on the average, the employees of Southwest Virginia Community College do engage in physical fitness activities away from the college campus.

Overall, with regard to the level of employee engagement in physical fitness activities at amenities located within the Community Center or elsewhere on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College, the data reveals that the weight room and outdoor walking track see the most use by college employees with 12 – 13 percent of respondents often or always engaging in physical fitness activities at these locations. The same two amenities also have the highest percentage of respondents who sometimes engage in physical fitness activities at 18 and 30 percent respectively. Overwhelmingly, however, over 50 percent of the respondents do not engage in physical fitness activities at either the weight room or the outdoor walking track, and the percentage is even greater for the remaining physical fitness amenities on the SVCC campus. Over three-fourths of the respondents never or rarely engage in physical fitness activities at the racquetball/walleyball courts, the aerobic/dance room, the basketball court, the indoor/outdoor climbing wall, or the tennis courts.

This data supports the researcher's observation that only a small number of employees regularly use the physical fitness amenities offered at the Community Center or elsewhere on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College. Further, in answer to the first research goal, the data obtained by the survey instrument adequately identifies the level of employee participation in health and fitness programs sponsored by Southwest Virginia Community College. The level of employee participation in the CommonHealth wellness program is low due to a lack of time and interest, although

employees believe the program to be worthwhile. The level of employee participation in physical fitness activities on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College is low due to a lack of time during the work day, and family or personal obligations that prohibit engagement in physical fitness activities either before or after work hours.

The data further revealed that approximately one-half of the respondents often or always participate in physical fitness activities away from the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College. Factors that influence the respondents' decision to engage in physical fitness activities away from the campus rather than on the campus is set forth in the following section.

- Identify factors that determine the level of employee participation in health and fitness programs offered by Southwest Virginia Community College.

With regard to the CommonHealth incentive-based wellness challenges and CommonHealth meetings where a variety of health, safety, and wellness topics are discussed, the data revealed several factors that explain why almost one-half of the respondents never or rarely participate in CommonHealth activities. Prevalent among these factors was a lack of time. Many of the comments provided by the respondents revealed a high opinion of the CommonHealth program; however, a lack of interest in the incentive-based challenges that were offered, and prior knowledge of the health, safety or wellness topic was the determining factor for several of the respondents. It may be concluded from the data that the CommonHealth programs are not offered at a convenient time for many of the on-campus employees. Further, based on the results of the survey, it may be concluded that the CommonHealth program should offer a wider variety of incentive-based wellness challenges.

Factors that influence the respondents' decision to engage in physical fitness activities away from the campus rather than on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College were not enough time (63 percent), family obligations (42 percent), personal obligations (33 percent), personal health reasons (8 percent), nothing appeals to me (4 percent), not interested in exercising (3 percent), and other (12 percent). The majority of comments provided to this open-ended question pertain to lack of time, and the preference of the respondents to participate in physical activities at home, or at locations away from the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College. Thus, it may be concluded from this data that the majority of on-campus employees do not feel they have enough time during their workday schedule to participate in physical activities. It is also apparent that most of the respondents have both family and personal obligations to attend to after the workday is complete, and that they are obligated to go home rather than stay on campus and participate in physical fitness activities.

The data reveals that the majority of the respondents engages in walking (81 percent) and yard work (72 percent) as methods of physical fitness activities away from the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College. Yard work may be construed as one type of personal obligation that 33 percent of the respondents refer to, while walking is a physical fitness activity that can be engaged in by almost everyone, at almost any location, and at any time that is personally convenient.

Accordingly, it can be concluded from the results of the survey, that the majority of on-campus employees do not believe they have the time during their workday to participate in physical fitness activities on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College. Additionally, a large number of the respondents have personal or family

obligations to attend to after work hours, and cannot remain on campus to engage in physical fitness activities. The data further reveals that many of the respondents have a personal preference to engage in physical fitness activities in the privacy of their own home, or in settings away from the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College. Specific comments were provided regarding the crowded conditions of the weight room, the inability to use the treadmills due to the crowded conditions, the Community Center amenities being too close to their job site, and the inconvenience of cleaning and redressing oneself during the middle of the work day. Although these comments were not great in number, it can be concluded from the comments, coupled with the lack of participation that the data revealed, that many on-campus employees do not feel comfortable or do not enjoy participating in physical fitness activities in a public setting with members of the community, at their place of work, or with their co-workers and supervisors.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations were submitted to increase the level of employee participation in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs at Southwest Virginia Community College. Recommendations were also provided for the college to sponsor specific types of health and fitness programs, with specific methods of delivery, to increase employee participation.

1. The CommonHealth program should be offered at varying times to accommodate employees' work schedules. For instance, meetings of 30 minutes duration could be scheduled on a rotating basis for 7:30 am, 12:30 pm, and 3:30 pm.

2. The CommonHealth program should offer a wider variety of incentive-based challenges such as group or team efforts, as well as the traditional individual effort, targeted toward specific objectives such as smoking cessation, weight loss, and increased physical activity.
3. Printed wellness materials and lectures by representatives of the American Red Cross, the American Cancer Society, the American Lung Association, the American Heart Association, and others, should be made available to all employees on a regular, rotating basis.
4. Low-fat or reduced calorie foods and snacks should be made available in all vending machines on the SVCC campus.
5. Employees should be allowed 30 minutes of release time twice a week at a time of their choosing to allow for physical fitness activities at the Community Center or elsewhere on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College. This release time would allow an individual to come to work early to exercise in the morning, to take an extra 30 minutes at lunch to exercise, or to leave work 30 minutes early in order to exercise. The details of providing log sheets and verification of engagement in physical fitness activities would need to be developed in conjunction with the administration and human resource office of Southwest Virginia Community College.
6. Organized group physical fitness activities (volleyball, basketball, softball) should be designed, developed and administered by the college's physical fitness instructors, in conjunction with the human resource office, in an effort

to increase employee participation in physical fitness activities on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College.

7. After implementation of the above listed recommendations, a study should be conducted to determine if employee participation in physical fitness activities on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College has increased.

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Employee Participation in Health and Fitness Programs

At Southwest Virginia Community College

Purpose

This study is being conducted to identify factors that determine the level of employee participation in agency-sponsored health and fitness programs at Southwest Virginia Community College. The information will be used to determine the specific types of health and fitness programs, and methods of delivery, that should be sponsored to increase employee participation.

Directions

Please select one answer to each question. You may use a check-mark, an 'X' or a circle. Also, please feel free to provide detailed answers to the questions that ask for additional comments. Remember – this questionnaire is **anonymous**, and your responses will not be shared with anyone. After you complete the questionnaire, please return it to Patricia Martin via campus mail if you are on campus, or in the self-addressed, stamped envelope, **by Friday, June 21.**

Questions

1. Are you:

_____ Twelve-month Administrative Faculty

_____ Nine-month Teaching Faculty

_____ Full-time Classified Employee

_____ Part-time Employee

2. Is your age:

_____ Between 18-24 years

_____ Between 25-37 years

_____ Between 38-56 years

_____ Age 57 years and over

3. Do you participate in the CommonHealth incentive-based wellness challenges?

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

4. Do you feel that the CommonHealth incentive-based wellness challenges help you to improve existing or acquire new healthy lifestyle behaviors?

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

5. Do you attend the CommonHealth meetings where a variety of health, safety, and wellness topics are discussed?

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

6. If you desire, please provide additional comments regarding the CommonHealth incentive-based wellness challenges, and the CommonHealth health, safety, and wellness meetings:

For the following questions: Never means not at all; Rarely means once or twice a year; Sometimes means once a month; Often means once a week; and Always means twice a week or more.

7. Do you engage in physical fitness activities at any of the following amenities located within the Community Center or elsewhere on campus?

Weight Room

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

Racquetball/Walleyball Courts

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

Aerobic/Dance Room

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

Basketball Court

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

Indoor/Outdoor Climbing Wall

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

Tennis Courts

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

Outdoor Walking Track

1 2 3 4 5
Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

8. Do you participate in physical fitness activities away from the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College?

1 2 3 4 5
Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

9. Please select all physical activities that you engage in, once a week or more, away from the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College.

walking bicycling running
 dancing yard work aerobics
 other (please list: _____)

10. Please select all that apply from the list of reasons that prohibit you from engaging in physical fitness activities at the Community Center or elsewhere on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College:

not enough time family obligations
 personal obligations personal health reasons
 nothing appeals to me not interested in exercising
 other

Please elaborate if you desire:

Please return to Patricia Martin by Friday, June 21. Thanks for your assistance.

(Appendix B)

June 10, 2002

To: All On-Campus Employees
From: Patricia Martin
RE: Health and Fitness Programs sponsored by Southwest Virginia
Community College

Enclosed please find a questionnaire for a study I am conducting regarding the level of employee participation in health and fitness programs sponsored by Southwest Virginia Community College. The study is also concerned with the factors that determine the level of participation of each individual employee. After collecting the data, the information will be used to make recommendations regarding the types of health and fitness programs, and methods of delivery, that should be offered by Southwest Virginia Community College in order to increase employee participation.

The college currently offers many health and fitness opportunities to faculty, staff, students, and community members through use of the Community Center, tennis courts, and walking track. With Dr. King's approval, I am conducting this study to determine how often you use these amenities, and why you do or do not use them. From your responses, recommendations will be made to improve and/or increase the health and fitness opportunities the college offers, with the ultimate goal of increasing employee participation.

Please take a few minutes to answer the questions on this survey. Your responses will be completely **anonymous**, and will not be shared with anyone. You will notice that the questionnaire has a hand-written number in the upper right hand corner. This number is for tracking purposes only. All completed questionnaires will be kept in a secure, off-campus location, and after this study is complete, the questionnaires will be destroyed.

I would appreciate your participation in this study. Please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return to me by Friday, June 21.

Thank you for your cooperation.

CommonHealth Comments

- They are excellent incentives for attention to wellness.
- I think it is very important for us to promote health, safety and wellness even if the numbers are sometimes disappointing.
- Good for making one aware of healthy activities a person needs to be involved in.
- Offers challenges and awareness.
- The information is current, and helps us manage health issues.
- I appreciate the college for providing this service. Thanks.
- Have not attended enough to make fair assessment.
- Often I cannot take time from work to get to the meeting.
- Everything I have done has been helpful.
- I think it is a very good program. I am already, however, doing similar things that CommonHealth advocates.
- What is this?
- I maintain an active lifestyle. Because of staying physically active, I don't participate in the CommonHealth incentive-based wellness challenges.
- Very good idea but my schedule makes it difficult to attend meetings.
- I particularly like the medical screenings each year.
- I have never been given the time or the opportunity to attend wellness meetings.
- They are beneficial. The time is not always convenient for me.
- The meetings provide a wealth of health information that is useful.
- I think the CommonHealth program is good to help monitor health.

- I enjoy participating in the CommonHealth programs. I have seen a change in my health over the last few years.
- Great.
- Good program.
- My work schedule does not allow me to attend these sessions.
- My lack of attendance is usually due to a lack of time!
- From observation, there seems to be a lack of attendance at meetings. I'm not sure if it is the topics or what.
- I don't attend because I primarily work off-campus and do not live near campus.
- Not enough programs. No variety of programs.
- It is hard to attend meetings because of work commitments.
- I think it is a good idea if you have the time.
- Even though I have not participated in CommonHealth that often, I plan to increase in the future.
- CommonHealth is very worthwhile. Due to time constraints, I have only participated in 1 or 2 since it began.
- It is great to have these opportunities to learn and to be encouraged to practice healthy lifestyles in the midst of my busy work life.
- I thought that CommonHealth was for full-time employees only.
- I like the screening activity. It seems we have held fewer sessions the last year or so.
- I prefer the action-based challenges that make you do something to see results. I enjoy pairing up with colleagues to complete the challenges.
- Never heard about it/never attended.

- I'd like to see more meetings. It seems we only do a couple of things a year.
- New programs need to be offered. We have exhausted their list of programs.
- I feel it is a very worthwhile program.
- Most helpful activities or services: checks on blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar.
- I like pre-service meetings. The challenges I remember (walking and drinking water) were not enough to get my interest.
- I generally have prior knowledge of the subjects discussed.

Reasons For Not Engaging In Physical Activities On The SVCC Campus

- The activities that I participate in take place off campus. I am planning to begin using weight room after work.
- I exercise early AM at home.
- I exercise on my own.
- No time at work. Engage in all activities at home.
- The hassle factor – it's too much trouble to change clothes, shower, etc. here and I live 50 minutes away.
- Racquet/Walleyball, aerobics, wall climbing, tennis courts do not appeal to me at this time.
- I am a morning person so if there was aerobics at 6:30 am, I could attend.
- My goal is to start using the weight room.
- Work schedule takes me away from campus often.
- I need to make it a higher priority.
- I think the late afternoon aerobics class offered for our faculty and staff is wonderful and I hope it continues.
- Would like to see people play volleyball or walleyball again.
- Would enjoy more time working on physical fitness but between work, school, 3 children, and no day care that is open after 6 pm for exercising time.
- Wellness Center is closer and my daughter likes going there.
- My main source of activity is racquetball. I play several times per year with Joey Trivette. That is the only time I play at SVCC.

- Only spare time is 10 pm – 12 am.
- I exercise at home.
- Not always as much time to do as much exercise as I would like to do due to family obligations and time constraints.
- I'm a part-time employee. I've never been given the opportunity to attend any of the wellness meetings that include the medical screenings. I would especially like to be given the time to attend these special screenings about blood pressure, diabetes screenings, etc. My family has a diabetes history. Thank you.
- I stop exercising because of health reasons; when the situation improves, I resume activity.
- I live too far away from the Community Center. The added time required for me or my family to drive here is not worth the effort.
- I hope to improve my use of college amenities.
- Need to take the time to take advantage of the Community Center.
- Usually it is very chaotic trying to remember to bring in extra clothes and then cleaning (hygiene) supplies and remembering to take of the same in reverse.
- The weight room and the aerobics classes are just wonderful. I really enjoy them but lately I have not had time for them. But we are starting to walk at lunch.
- When I am at work I do not feel comfortable playing – even after hours.
- I enjoy exercise that produces change – mowing, weeding garden, weed eater.
- I am a very brittle diabetic.
- I participate often; my health did keep me from exercising for a while. It's hard to get back into a routine. The weight room is great for me.

- It's too close to my office!
- Live at some distance from SVCC campus.
- Aerobics is for pleasure, not for a grade. We don't need more stress in our lives.
- Often encouraged by administration to stay in office, even after office hours are over.
- I exercise in the morning before coming to SVCC. I stay late and then need to get home to handle duties there. It's hard to break away mid-day due to job requirements and it would take longer than 45 minutes to exercise, shower, redo hair, etc.
- Aerobics classes don't fit work schedule. Weight room crowded.
- Need help/knowledge how to work weight equipment without injuring myself.
Walking is much more fun in a group setting – would like to know when groups/clichés form that walk at certain times.
- Treadmills are always in use.
- If we had release time, such as extra time at lunch so we could combine lunch and training.
- I wish that there were lunchtime aerobics or walking groups. I cannot stay late everyday for evening activities.
- I really need to be more active. I have a lack of motivation on my part. I need something that would keep me interested and motivated. I think it is wonderful that we have all the wonderful opportunities at SVCC to participate in physical fitness. The facilities are great. I just need to be more involved (motivated) than what I am.
- Not enough time to exercise, shower and return to work. It is just as easy to exercise (walking) after returning home. Many of aerobics classes are too late for me to attend.

- Do not feel comfortable in overall environment. I would prefer scheduled time for employees only.
- I used to walk 5 out of 7 days. My only excuse for not walking now is lack of dedication and time.
- Have some exercise equipment at home.
- Working at the Community Center makes it hard to separate workout from work.
- Overcrowded. There is a need for more treadmills.
- New employee.