

**Position of TAHPERD  
Requiring Physical Education Activities  
In College and University General Education Requirements**

**It is the position of TAHPERD that Colleges and Universities require a core curriculum component which includes both lifetime wellness/fitness and physical activity components for all students. This requirement should be a minimum of two semester credit hours and could be met through one or more courses. Courses should be taught through or approved by HPERD related departments.**

**Rationale**

The Surgeon General's goals for national health promotion, Healthy People 2010 (1), lists increasing activity levels in all persons as one of the top 10 leading health indicators. Only in the last decade has physical inactivity been included among the highest risk factors for heart disease and obesity (2). Obesity is in turn a risk factor for other health related issues such as Type II diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol (3, 4). Obesity related medical expenditures due to these risk factors have been reported to be \$117 billion annually in the US (5). In Texas, this figure is \$5.4 billion annually, third highest among all states behind California and New York (5). Increased rates of moderate physical activity could lower obesity related medical costs by \$76 billion annually (6).

In addition to reducing medical costs, other benefits have been shown in the literature. Experts generally agree that there is a strong connection between learning and healthy lifestyles (7). According to Kimbell, having an unhealthy body makes learning more difficult (7). Cottman and Engesser-Cesar suggest that exercise enhances and protects brain function (8). There is a strong link between cerebral function, memory and spatial perception, language, attention, emotion, non-verbal cues and decision making, and exercise (9). This suggests that physical education, movement activities and games may actually boost cognition. However, most college aged students are not engaging in activity on their own.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has stated that 63% of adults (18 years & older) do not achieve at least 20 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity on most if not all days of the week and 33% of adults are not active at all (10). Much of the literature leads one to believe that those who need exercise the most are likely to be those who do not have the motivation to actually participate on their own.

College is an important time for young adults to be influenced positively regarding lifetime physical activity. Sparling and Snow reported that six years after graduation, their study's participants were influenced for continued participation in fitness activity by three factors (11):

- 1) attitudes toward exercise,
- 2) confidence in setting up personal exercise programs,
- 3) exercise status in their senior year of college.

Well-structured wellness/fitness/activity programs can address all of these factors. It is vital that this golden opportunity to prepare young adults for a full, healthy life not be missed.

## References

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