

## Developing your own Formal Fitness/Activity Club

Ideas to get you started:

1. Do some research – check out other groups on campus. Remember, you don't need to reinvent the wheel.

- Find out what others are doing that is similar to what you want to do.
- Choose groups that deal with interests similar to yours or that use methods you might use.
- Ask yourself if one of these groups can meet your needs. You may not need to start another group (join the existing group) or you may want to form a “sister or brother group” as part of the larger organization.
- Note what these groups do well and what characteristics you'd like to have as part of your own group. Do they have current website and contact information? Do the activities sound fun to you?

2. Recruit your “charter” members!

- Gather together a few other people who share your interest in starting (not just joining) a new group. These people will become your group's initial organizing committee. This committee will do most of the initial planning for your group.
- Here are some suggestions on how to identify effective co-founders and spark their interest:
  - Look for people who want to volunteer because they share your concerns and issues.
  - Seek out those who are representative of your group's desired membership. For example, an initial organizing committee made up of people of varying ages and cultures is more likely to attract a diverse general membership.
  - Find tasks for all those who want to be involved from the outset. Sharing leadership and rotating tasks as early as possible helps you distribute the work and prevent burn-out. You will also be demonstrating what social support is all about; it's a group, not individual, process.

3. Planning - You will need to decide quite a number of things before the first meeting of your group.

- Frequency

Decide how often your group will meet. If your group meets less often than once a month, it runs the risk of losing momentum and focus; interest may die out in the long weeks before the next meeting. Some groups may have the interest to meet more than once a month. If so, feel free to go with the interest, but don't feel that every two weeks is the norm. Many groups only meet once a month and are quite successful.

- Location/Time

Decide on a central location and meeting time. Some people may be tempted to have a rotating meeting. This has benefits and potential problems. A benefit is that some people will have at least a few meetings in a convenient place and time. This can increase the total number of people attending throughout the year. A potential problem is that the group becomes fragmented because only certain people attend certain meetings. Also, unless the meeting locations are well publicized in advance, people may forget where the meeting is and decide not to attend. With the same location and time, people always know where to go.

- Emphasis of the group.

There are many different kinds of fitness groups. Each has its own style, and each helps people in a different ways. You and the other people who are interested in starting a fitness group probably already have the type of support you want in mind. Work with those ideas to make a group that will be most useful for those interested!

#### 4. Publicity

- You may decide to form your group only with people you know. Great! If you do decide you want others to join, publicity is crucial.
- Decide how you will get the word out. The best way to do this is by placing notices in your living space (residence hall or fraternity/sorority) or talk face-to-face about your group to others in your classes, neighborhood, or other groups to which you belong.
- Other potential ways to advertise on campus include: Cambus, IC transit, University Box Office, The Daily Iowan, the ITCs, the Office of Student Life, the master calendar, Facebook, and radio stations. (For more information, contact Health Iowa for a summary of advertising requirements for these arenas).

#### 5. Maintenance

- If your group starts to grow or you simply want some assistance with information or group planning, you can get professional help from the University of Iowa.
- You can register your group as a student organization with the Division of Recreational Services ([http://www.recserv.uiowa.edu/programs/clubs/master\\_copy.pdf](http://www.recserv.uiowa.edu/programs/clubs/master_copy.pdf)) or the Office of Student Life (<http://imu.uiowa.edu/osl/>). By doing this, you may become eligible for funding through the University of Iowa Student Government, web space, meeting space on campus, and an advisor. Email the Division of Recreational Services Sports Club Coordinator at [raymond-beemer@uiowa.edu](mailto:raymond-beemer@uiowa.edu), 319-335-9291 and the Office of Student Life office at [osl@uiowa.edu](mailto:osl@uiowa.edu) or 319-335-3059.
- Health Iowa can also be a resource for you to manage your group or to obtain more information about fitness and healthy lifestyles. The website is full of useful information: <http://www.uistudenthealth.com/exercise/>. Call Health Iowa at 353-5965 or email [sara-stahlman@uiowa.edu](mailto:sara-stahlman@uiowa.edu) or [amy-fletcher@uiowa.edu](mailto:amy-fletcher@uiowa.edu).

Revised from the Self Help Resource Centre of Greater Toronto (www.selfhelp.on.ca)