



ELON
UNIVERSITY

Campus
Recreation
& Wellness

2020-2023 Integration Plan

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INTRODUCTION

The Importance of Recreation and Wellness

College campuses across the country are wrestling with challenges associated with student wellness and well-being, including increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression amongst students (Henriques, 2014). As institutions prepare to effectively confront such issues, it is important that the development of positive wellness behaviors and upstream prevention approaches are prioritized in addition to crisis intervention programs. This need is evident by the joint statement released by NASPA and NIRSA (2018) emphasizing the importance of integrated approaches to wellness on college campuses:

“We believe it is time to transcend reactive, siloed, programmatic approaches to health and establish foundational, proactive, and upstream-based well-being initiatives for the campus community. While students must receive appropriate and reactive care when needed, there are large-scale benefits to proactive, upstream approaches that will allow increasing numbers of students to flourish and thrive. By focusing on the whole – the whole person, the whole educational experience, the whole institution, the whole community – well-being becomes a multifaceted goal and a shared responsibility for the entire campus.”

Recreation and wellness departments are a key contributor to the wellness of students, faculty, and staff. By providing a variety of facilities, programs, and services that have minimal barriers to entry, all members of the campus community can benefit from a strong recreation and wellness department. In a recent study of student behaviors and outcomes, students who regularly utilize recreation and wellness services were found to have higher grade point averages, were retained at a higher rate, and reported higher perceived wellness across multiple dimensions of well-being, including physical and emotional well-being (NIRSA, 2019). Additionally, those students were more likely to prioritize a healthy lifestyle after college, emphasizing the importance that college plays on the development of lifelong behaviors.

Student Wellness & Well-Being Workgroup

Wellness has also been an important topic at Elon University in recent years. In 2016, the Presidential Task Force on Social Climate and Out-of-Class Engagement reported that student wellness emerged as a significant contributing factor to the student experience at Elon University. In response to that report, Provost Steven House and Vice President for Student Life Jon Dooley initiated a workgroup in August 2017 to investigate an integrated approach to student wellness and well-being at Elon University. Caroline Ketcham, Professor and Chair of Exercise Science, and Larry Mellinger, Director of Campus Recreation, were appointed to chair the 16-person workgroup, which included students, faculty, and staff.

The workgroup met throughout the 2017-2018 academic year and submitted a report in May 2018 that outlined a campus wellness model and implementation framework, as well as 25 recommendations to integrate campus wellness efforts. The wellness model includes six dimensions, based on the Gallup Well-Being Index, which can be utilized to categorize programs, services, and resources. The report also introduced the Elon University community to the Act-Belong-Commit framework, which was developed by Rob Donovan as a public health campaign in Western Australia in 2008 to inspire a mentally healthy community where individuals are empowered to cultivate personal wellness values and behaviors, and to develop supportive and thriving communities.

It should be noted that, while the scope of the workgroup was originally intended to address student wellness, it is important that faculty and staff wellness is vital to a thriving campus community. The full report is available to members of the Elon University community on the Presidential Task Force for Social Climate and Out-of-Class Engagement website.

Becoming Campus Recreation & Wellness

One of the 25 recommendations from the workgroup included combining Health Promotion with Campus Recreation to create a new department, Campus Recreation & Wellness. Health Promotion became a department in 2006 and was responsible for staff- and student-led educational programs on a variety of health and wellness topics, such as substance education, sexual and relationship health, violence response, and stress management, among others. Campus Recreation had been in existence since 1992, operating recreational facilities and providing a variety of programs promoting physical activity, engagement with the natural environment, and leadership through fitness, sports, and outdoor adventure activities. Both departments had a strong reputation for excellent student employment opportunities.

This new department, which officially became Campus Recreation & Wellness on June 1, 2018, is intended to be a campus leader in providing an integrated approach to student, faculty, and staff wellness and well-being. With its organizational structure under Student Life and the Dean of Students, the department provides wellness promotion and prevention services, but remains closely aligned with campus intervention services, such as health, counseling, and student care and outreach.

Strategic Planning Process

The Campus Recreation & Wellness strategic planning process began in July 2018, shortly after the realignment. Throughout that summer, the department developed an action plan and began to integrate guiding frameworks and documents from both Health Promotion and Campus Recreation. In the fall 2018 semester, SWOT analyses were conducted in each of the programmatic areas, which included significant student input. Additionally, past program and facility usage data was analyzed and contextualized within the Act-Belong-Commit framework.

In spring 2019, new department mission and values statements were adopted, and strategic themes began to emerge. It should be noted that, during this time, searches for four professional positions were also occurring, adding to the significant change that had already occurred in the new department's first year. The plan was finalized in December 2019. Specific action items to operationalize the plan are completed through objectives and key results (OKRs), developed annually (more information about OKRs can be found on page 7).

The Campus Recreation & Wellness strategic plan, known as the Integration Plan, is a roadmap for fully integrating the new department, both internally and externally. This plan and its supporting annual OKRs will provide a foundation to address campus wellness opportunities and concerns, as both a leader and strong campus partner with other departments and stakeholders, as new University and Student Life strategic plans are finalized and begin implementation in 2020.

A VISION FOR INTEGRATED WELLNESS

When the Campus Recreation & Wellness Integration Plan is implemented, all members of the Elon University community will benefit from diverse, innovative programs and facilities that support an integrated approach to wellness. Looking ahead to 2023, we expect that there will be several characteristics of the department that contribute to a thriving campus community.

Shared Language and Consistent Messaging

The Student Wellness & Well-Being Workgroup presented a vision of an Elon University committed to fostering a culture of holistic wellness where individuals have an opportunity to transform their mind, body, and spirit. By providing access to resources, educational tools, and support, members of our community are empowered to cultivate personal wellness values and behaviors that last throughout and beyond their time at Elon. Campus Recreation & Wellness will be a department that promotes this vision through effective programs and services, as well as strong partnerships that foster both wellness and consistent messaging starting with prospective student, faculty, and staff interactions with the University and continuing throughout their time on campus, both in and out of the classroom.

Integrated Programs and Services

Department programs and services will have updated operational processes that provide the framework for consistent, high quality experiences across all program areas and in all department facilities. Within the department, programs and services will be designed to contribute to multiple dimensions of well-being, and we will foster a collaborative approach with a variety of campus and community partners to promote an institutional culture of health and well-being.

Access to Opportunities for All Students, Faculty, and Staff

Facilities will be welcoming, inclusive places for individuals of all identities and physical abilities. Financial barriers to participation will be minimized so that they only exist where they absolutely must, and even then, opportunities will exist to subsidize those fees. The student employment experience will continue to focus on the development on career readiness skills and competencies, as well as meaning making through reflection.

Enhanced Social Climate and Belonging

Campus Recreation & Wellness will not merely be facilities where students, faculty, and staff go to exercise and learn, but it will be a vibrant destination where members of our community can relax and interact with others between classes, get information about a variety of wellness-related resources, or attend a late-night weekend program run by a student organization. Programs and events will provide opportunities for students to meet new friends in a healthy, positive environment and solidify bonds that will last well beyond their time at Elon.

A Plan for Integrated Wellness Facilities

The Koury Center will be reimagined for future use as an integrated wellness space to potentially include recreation, wellness, health education, health services, counseling services, academic departments and educational spaces, and social spaces that will be a physical representation of the Elon vision for student, faculty, and staff wellness. Other recreation and wellness facilities on campus will effectively complement offerings in Koury to engage students, faculty, and staff across campus.

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

Mission

Campus Recreation & Wellness contributes to the holistic well-being of students, faculty, and staff by providing access to recreational and educational experiences, fostering a sense of community and belonging, and empowering individuals to cultivate positive wellness values and behaviors that last throughout and beyond their time at Elon.

Values

As we serve members of the Elon University community, we offer, model, and embody the following core values:

- Visionary *leadership* to make our campus, community, and the world a better place
- Programs, services, employment opportunities, and spaces to support authentic, meaningful relationships and foster a sense of *community*
- A commitment to cultivating a climate of *diversity, inclusion, and equity* where difference is celebrated and all feel welcome and are able to access opportunities
- *Self-care* practices that afford us the capacity to be successful and care for each other
- Time and space to disconnect, recharge, and have *fun*

Facilities

Campus Recreation & Wellness manages several campus facilities to deliver programs and services, including:

- Koury Center – Alumni Gym, Jordan Gym, Beck Pool, Stewart Fitness Center, Needham Pilates Studio, two exercise studios, three racquetball courts, a squash court, and a student wellness space
- Phoenix Activities & Recreation Center – a fitness center and two courts
- South Gym – two courts
- Lodge Property – Elon Challenge, the Lodge, fire pit, pavilion, and trails
- Driving Range – ten hitting bays and two practice greens
- Sports Fields – South Campus Field Complex, Francis Center Fields, and O’Kelly Field

Programs and Services

The following programs and services are provided to the campus community:

- Athletic training
- Experiential learning and outdoor adventures: Adventures in Leadership, the Elon Challenge, outdoor adventure trips, and equipment rentals
- Fitness programs: group exercise, personal training, and swim lessons
- Special events: various single-day events throughout the academic year
- Sport programs: club sports and intramurals
- Student wellness programs: substance education, stress management, sexual/relationship health, and student peer wellness education

Professional Affiliations

We are institutional members of and/or our work is closely associated with the following professional associations:

- [NIRSA: Leaders in Collegiate Recreation](#)
- [National Consortium for Building Healthy Academic Communities](#)
- [JED Foundation](#)
- [American College Health Association](#)
- [Association of Experiential Education](#)
- [Leave No Trace](#)
- [National Council for Behavioral Health](#)
- [National Athletic Training Association](#)
- [American Red Cross](#)

Guiding Frameworks

Our work is guided and informed by the following theories and frameworks, and is infused throughout both the participant and student employment experiences:

- Act-Belong-Commit
- NIRSA Strategic Values and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Framework
- Social-Ecological Model
- Kolb's Cycle of Experiential Learning
- Social Change Model
- Transtheoretical Model (Stages of Change)

STRATEGIC THEMES

As Campus Recreation & Wellness integrates department and campus wellness initiatives, five strategic themes will provide distinct areas of focus and drive the development of objectives and key results each year throughout the duration of the strategic plan.

Position Professional Staff to Be Campus and National Wellness Leaders

The Thrive theme in Boldly Elon, as well as the University adopting Act-Belong-Commit as the campus wellness framework, elevate wellness as a campus priority in the coming decade. A highly trained, competent, and supported staff is critical to the well-being of the entire campus community. Professional staff members must continue to have access to professional development opportunities, including certifications and other professional credentials, to lead campus wellness initiatives as well as national conversations and research across our programmatic disciplines.

Develop Our Student Staff to its Fullest Potential

Campus employment offers students accessible, high impact developmental experiences. With more than 250 student employees, we must continue to invest in the student staff to ensure learning, the development of employable skills, and the delivery of inclusive, safe, high quality programs and services. This investment should include both broad-reaching department initiatives as well as program-specific training and development.

Review and Update Operational Processes for all Facilities, Programs, and Services

The department has grown significantly over the past decade, so operational processes and systems will be reviewed and updated to ensure consistency and effectiveness, and efficiency, and to eliminate any unnecessary barriers to participation so that the healthy choice is the easy choice for students, faculty, and staff. Additionally, opportunities to increase community engagement in facilities and programs should be investigated.

Foster and Nurture Campus and Community Partnerships to Advance Wellness

Partnerships were critical to the success of both Campus Recreation and Health Promotion, and are now more important than ever as Campus Recreation & Wellness continues to integrate wellness programs, services, and resources. Effective partnerships, both on and off campus, will ensure that students, faculty, and staff receive consistent messaging and have access to programs and services.

Ensure the Development of Facilities That Meet Current and Future Needs

It is clear that the Koury Center is in need of significant updates prior to the completion of the next institutional strategic plan, but a master plan must be created so all recreation and wellness facilities can meet current and future needs. The original part of South Gym is in disrepair, the Lodge and challenge course will need updates to reach their full potential, lights on the South Campus fields will need to be replaced within the next five years, and a turf field should be considered to account for increased usage of outdoor facilities.

OBJECTIVES AND KEY RESULTS: A PATHWAY TO INTEGRATION

In 1971, Andy Grove introduced a method of goal setting while serving as the executive vice president of Intel. Objectives and key results (OKRs) offer a way to connect strategy at all levels of an organization through a results-oriented goal setting process. Objectives offer a direction. Each objective has accompanying key results, which are measurable milestones that occur within the prescribed timeframe. OKRs are developed at the organizational level, then each team or individual within the organization develops OKRs, each one directly connected with an organizational OKR. The process is intended to be short-term (i.e., no longer than one year) to ensure both connectivity and flexibility. (Doerr, 2018)

Campus Recreation & Wellness will utilize OKRs as a goal setting process for the duration of the Integration Plan. Organizational OKRs will be established for each academic year. Each organizational objective will support at least one of the strategic themes; steward the implementation of the Act-Belong-Commit framework; ensure the development of facilities that meet current and future needs; review and update operational processes for all facilities, programs, and services; foster and nurture campus and community partnerships to advance wellness; and/or develop our staff to its fullest potential. Individual OKRs will contribute directly to organizational OKRs, and will be reviewed at the end of each semester.

The implementation of the OKR process will serve three distinct purposes that are essential to the success of the Campus Recreation & Wellness Integration Plan:

1. Set a clear pathway for integration of the department by aligning goals and establishing organizational and individual accountability measures.
2. Ensure every individual is contributing to strategic themes.
3. Allow the department to be nimble and adaptable as university and division strategic plans are finalized and begin implementation.

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