



Work-life Balance and Wellness Program Strategic Plan 2011-2016

Background

The University of Texas at Austin offers several work-life balance and wellness services to faculty and staff; however, there has not been a concerted effort to combine these offerings into a comprehensive work-life balance and wellness program. For several years the Staff Council, Human Resource Services (HRS), RecSports, the School of Kinesiology and Health Education and other campus organizations have advocated for enhanced wellness programming for faculty and staff. Due to their persistence and hard work, the *HealthPoint* organization, a department within HRS, hired a Work-life Balance and Wellness Coordinator in August 2011. With a full-time employee dedicated to employee wellness, UT Austin has the capacity to affect healthy change and strengthen a culture of wellness.

In order to represent the voice of the staff & faculty community in the wellness program, *HealthPoint* is forming a Wellness Advisory Committee. The Committee consists of health experts, representatives from campus providers of wellness services & health benefits and representatives from the Faculty and Staff Councils. The Committee members include:

- Ryan Baldwin, representing Staff Council
- John Bartholomew, Department of Kinesiology and Health Education
- Rhonda Cox, RecSports
- Susan Harnden, Employee Assistance Program
- Adrienne Howarth-Moore, Human Resource Services
- Linda Millstone, Office of the Vice President for Diversity and Community Engagement
- Claire Moore, *HealthPoint* (Committee Chair)
- Bill Sage, MD, JD, Vice Provost for Health Affairs
- Jim Walker, Office of Sustainability
- David Warner, representing Faculty Council

In addition to the Wellness Advisory Committee, the Wellness Program will leverage partnerships with various other units and individuals on campus with a vested interest in employee wellness. The *HealthPoint* Work-life Balance and Wellness Coordinator will represent faculty and staff interests on the Wellness Network, an initiative sponsored by the Division of Student Affairs, and will work in partnership on issues that affect the entire campus.

The Case for Wellness

Looking at the medical claims for UT Austin, the top health risks are diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol and poor back health. From fiscal year 2005 to fiscal year 2009, the cost to the medical plan rose 160% for diabetes, 104% for hypertension, 163% for high cholesterol and 83% for poor back health. These increases are higher than those incurred by UT System as a whole. All of these conditions have a strong association to modifiable life-style behaviors. With the majority of an employee's waking hours spent in the workplace, the time to act is now.

By implementing a comprehensive wellness program, UT Austin can potentially

- **Improve the health status and quality of life for faculty and staff.** The four most common conditions at UT Austin are all related to factors that can be improved through wellness programming and benefits design, such as weight management, stress reduction and adherence to medication.
- **Control healthcare costs.** Healthy employees cost less to insure, and controlling a chronic disease can prevent costly complications, hospital stays and emergency room visits. Studies have shown a return on investment from wellness programs ranging from \$1.40 to \$6.00 for every dollar spent.^{1,2,3,4}
- **Control other costs through increased productivity and reduced absenteeism.** Healthier employees take fewer sick days and are more productive at work. Absenteeism has been associated with stress, obesity and multiple risk factors that can be improved through wellness programming.⁵
- **Improve recruitment and retention.** According to Well Steps, an employer that cares about the health of employees is often seen as a better place to work.⁶ Such companies save money by retaining workers and they have a competitive edge in recruiting new employees. In Fortune's 2011 list of Best Companies to Work For, employees described their top employer using words like people, family, wellness and benefits more often than words like pay and opportunity.
- **Improve employee morale and job satisfaction.** In a time when budgets are tight, salary increases are not a guarantee and reductions in force may happen, UT Austin can show their appreciation for their employees by supporting work-life balance and wellness friendly policies and programs. These are tangible actions showing that UT Leadership cares about their employee's health and well-being.
- **Reduce injury related costs.** Recovering from a work injury can take longer for employees that are deconditioned and/or have underlying health conditions that prevent early & appropriate return to work.

Strategic Plan

The overall goal of the Work-life Balance and Wellness Program is to improve the health and well-being of faculty and staff. In order to achieve this overall goal, the strategies have been divided into 6 areas: leadership, communications, policy, benefits design, programs and supportive environment, and evaluation.

Wellness is a multidimensional state of being that describes the process of becoming aware of and making choices toward a more positive existence. True wellness is a full integration of all of the following states of wellness: physical; emotional; intellectual; occupational; environmental; social; and spiritual. The strategic plan strives to improve the quality of life for faculty and staff through each of these states of wellness.

Guiding principles of operation:⁷

- Employees' privacy will be respected. Personal health information is protected and kept confidential according to Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA) and Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA) regulations.
- Participation in programs and services is voluntary.
- Planning and implementation are conducted with input from key stakeholders.
- Program evaluation will be based on aggregate data.

- Benefits decisions are guided by employee input and cost benefit, quality and effectiveness data.

1. Leadership Goal: Leadership at all levels will support and contribute to a culture of wellness.

Activities for Year 1:

- Senior leadership will endorse and promote the Work-life Balance and Wellness Program, strategic plan, website and initiatives.
- A wellness toolkit will be available through the website for supervisors and managers to create a culture of wellness in their departments.

Activities for Year 2-5:

- Ongoing outreach to University leadership to support faculty and staff participation in health and well-being programs.
- Support managers and supervisors in implementing and maintaining a culture of wellness (i.e., information through Human Resources Forum and Human Resources Consortium).
- Integration of wellness into university objectives and university strategic planning.
- A wellness component will be added to the leadership training. Leadership will take a prominent role in wellness activities (i.e., endorsement of events, participating in the physical activity challenge, featuring the wellness program in communications and recognizing wellness champions).

2. Communication Goal: Faculty and staff will know what is available and have easy access to information.

Activities for Year 1:

- Update the Work-life Balance and Wellness Program website to be more user-friendly and provide current health information and services.
- Launch the website and kick-off the wellness program.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive communications plan to move people to action around health improvement. This includes collaborative efforts with UT System's Benefits and Living Well programming.
- Increase the use of technology by using Facebook and Twitter.
- Establish lines of regular communication with key partners on campus.
- Ensure clear and consistent messages by working with the Wellness Network and key partners on campus.

Activities for Years 2-5

- Stay up-to-date with popular methods of communication.
- Create and implement annual plan for communications.
- Continue collaboration with the Wellness Network to communicate wellness information.

3. Policy Goal: UT Austin policies will support a culture of wellness.

Activities for Year 1

- Promote existing flexible work schedule policy to increase opportunities for interested staff and faculty to engage in wellness-related activities without compromising University operations.
- Promote existing Family-Friendly Faculty Policies to create a supportive and productive environment that allows our faculty opportunities to maintain a healthy balance between their professional and personal lives.

Activities for Year 2-5

- Implement policies that are conducive to health and wellness.

4. Benefits Design Goal: UT System will offer a premier benefits plan with the latest value-based design to meet the health needs of UT Austin faculty and staff.

Activities for Year 1

- Advocate to UT System for value-based benefits design (VBBD). Currently UT System is preparing for the implementation of Senate Bill 5, which permits UT System to consider an insurance premium differential for people who achieve health goals or participate in health promotion programs. The Wellness Program will advocate for incentives that help employees improve their health.
- Encourage UT System to prioritize long-term employee insurance planning so that UT Austin will have a sustainable, effective self-insured benefits program that utilizes VBBD to support prevention, risk reduction, disease management and consumer accountability.

Activities Years 2-5

- Based on the available data and employee input, continue to advocate to UT System for VBBD strategies that support UT Austin employees.

5. Programs and Supportive Environment Goal: The Work-life Balance and Wellness Program will offer evidence-based, accessible, quality and relevant programming for faculty and staff. The UT Austin campus will support an environment that makes the healthy choice the easy choice.

Activities for Year 1: Focus on prevention and risk reduction

- Increase participation in the health risk assessment (September 1, 2011 – November 30, 2011)
- Offer onsite health screenings in combination with the health risk assessment during annual enrollment for plan year 2012-2013. The Work-life Balance and Wellness Coordinator will advocate to UT System to remove barriers to mobile screening services offered through the UT Select Plan. Under the Affordable Care Act, preventative screenings are covered 100% by the plan. Mobile screening programs have been shown effective in the identification of early risk factors (high cholesterol, blood pressure, glucose, etc.) and encourage non-symptomatic employees to seek treatment from their personal healthcare provider at the earliest, most cost effective stage of a health concern.
- Increase participation in current wellness services, such as the Fitness Discount Program offered through UT Select Medical Plan.
- Implement population-based wellness programs, such as online tools related to ergonomics and mental and emotional health.

- Work with the Wellness Network and key partners to implement population-based wellness programs affecting the entire campus, such as an onsite farmer's market or walking maps with appropriate signage.
- Offer evidenced based lifestyle improvement programs, such as onsite weight management programs, onsite tobacco treatment programs, lunch-and-learn series, etc.
- Develop a plan to improve fitness center access.
- Offer comprehensive work-life balance services that includes 24/7 access to childcare, eldercare and legal & financial services plus an expanded nationwide employee discount program.
- Support the Wellness Network in implementing their strategic plan and wellness initiatives.

Activities for Year 2-5: Expand focus to include disease management

- Work with key partners to continue to offer population-based and group wellness programs supported by healthy environmental changes.
- Implement a healthy vending machine guideline.
- Design and implement a healthy food guideline for eateries on campus (i.e., in order for an eatery to sell food on campus the contract will establish a minimum amount of healthy options and to offer these choices at or below the price of other items).
- Continue to offer the free, confidential health risk assessment and biometric screening on an annual basis accompanied with incentives.
- Encourage dependent and retiree population to participate in the UT Austin wellness program.
- Increase use of and enhance existing disease management programs and offer new programs onsite.

6. Continuous Quality Improvement Goal: The Work-life Balance and Wellness Program will use data to evaluate and improve its program and to further their strategic plan.

Assessment and evaluation will measure

- Health risk assessment (HRA) participation rates and evaluate cohort data for changes in health risks and health status
- Wellness program participation rates
- Wellness program outcomes
- Program participant satisfaction
- Changes in health care cost trends and health care utilization (insurance claims, workers' compensation costs, Sick Leave Pool, Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and disability rates)

Activities for Year 1

- Assess the health status of the faculty and staff. The Work-life Balance and Wellness Coordinator is currently conducting an environmental scan, researching the programs currently offered and assessing health risks and conditions. The assessment includes data from the following sources: recruitment and retention, workers' compensation, Sick Leave Pool, FMLA, short-term disability, medical and pharmacy claims and the health risk assessment.
- Apply for and achieve the Mayor's Fitness Council Partner Certification, which recognizes healthy employers who meet certain requirements.

Activities for Years 2-5:

- Continue evaluation of wellness initiatives and health data.
- Conduct program evaluation to determine impact on health improvement, culture change and cost containment.
- Continue strategic planning based on outcomes from program evaluation and health data.
- Seek national certifications and awards to recognize wellness program successes.
- Continue to align and integrate programs and communications with UT System health care benefits offerings.

Summary

Not only is wellness the right thing to do for employees, it also contributes to the overarching vision of the University of Texas at Austin being a Tier 1 Research Institution. In order to fulfill its mission of achieving excellence in the interrelated areas of undergraduate education, graduate education, research and public service, the university must recruit and retain the best and brightest faculty and staff. Creating a culture of wellness can persuade top professors to seek out the University of Texas at Austin. Moreover, when staff and faculty feel more satisfied and have increased morale, it improves students' experience.

In addition, having a premier wellness program offers students the opportunity to apply the skills they are learning in the classroom to real life experience. The wellness program will involve UT student interns to accomplish this strategic plan. Upon completing an internship with the wellness program, students will be better prepared to enter the workforce or continue on to graduate school. The wellness program expands on many of the degree tracks offered at the university, including kinesiology and health education, social work, public health, nutritional science, nursing, pharmacology, business and communications. The first of these interns will come from the Department of Kinesiology and Health Education beginning spring 2012. By providing a unique internship with a premier employee wellness program, what starts here really can change the world.

¹ Berry L, Mirabito A, Baun W. What's the Hard Return on Employee Wellness Programs? *Harvard Business Review*. 88(12):104-112.

² Chapman L. Meta-evaluation of Worksite Health Promotion Economic Return Studies: 2005 Update. *The Art of Health Promotion*. 2005;4:1-11.

³ Goetzel R, Juday T, Ozminkowski R. What's the ROI? A Systematic Review of Return on Investment (ROI) Studies of Corporate Health and Productivity Management Initiatives. *AWHP's Worksite Health*. 1999;6:12-21.

⁴ Matson Koffman D, Goetzel R, Anwuri V, Shore K, Orentein D, LaPier T. Healthy and Stroke Free: Successful Business Strategies to Prevent Cardiovascular Disease. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 2005; 29(5, Supplement 1):113-121.

⁵ Aldana S. Financial Impact of Health Promotion Programs: A Comprehensive Review of the Literature. *American Journal of Health Promotion*. 2001; 15(5):296-320.

⁶ WellSteps. *Worksite Wellness Implementation Guide*. www.wellsteps.com/custom/pdfs/WellSteps_Impl_Guide.pdf Accessed August 2001.

⁷ University of Michigan. Mhealthy Five-Year Strategic Plan Executive Summary. http://hr.umich.edu/mhealthy/about/exec_summary412.pdf. Accessed August 2011.