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Steps Towards Every Person Stronger

The United States of America, among other nations, faces the growing trend of unhealthy and inactive lifestyles, resulting in obesity, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and countless other health concerns impeding the quality of daily life. In order to combat these complications, a valuation of maintaining an active lifestyle amongst the population must be prioritized. The target of such newfound vigor for an active lifestyle is best impressed upon college students, as this is one of the periods in which an individual is most susceptible to establishing habits that will continue for the rest of his or her life. Encouraging an active lifestyle throughout this experience will perpetuate a healthier approach in the future, and could effectively reduce the staggering number of people impacted by disease and obesity amongst this generation. In order to effectively promote this lifestyle, the students must be enthusiastic about altering their way of life in favor of a more positive one. The STEPS Program provides a service to the University of Arizona students and faculty that is unparalleled at any other institution across the globe, through the conglomeration of fun, competition, and health. This program, standing for Steps Towards Every Person Stronger, is designed to create a unique form of competition that will spark an enthusiasm and appreciation for an active lifestyle amongst young adults.

STEPS will utilize modern technology to alter the average perception of fitness. A pedometer, either as a clip for backpacks and purses or a bracelet to be worn, will be provided at no cost by the university for all who enroll in the program to track the physical activity of each participant. Every step a participant takes is counted by the pedometer, and resets at 12 A.M.

Every registered pedometer will be linked to the participant's UAccess account to ensure an accurate record of steps taken each day throughout the course of the academic year. At the conclusion of each day, these steps are converted into points, as a single step counts as one point. The pedometer is primarily responsible for maintaining the number of steps walked throughout the course of the day, whether on campus grounds or while engaging in other activities. Other forms of physical activity, such as running, lifting weights, swimming, and playing sports, will be awarded additional points based upon the intensity and length of time spent exercising. The pedometers will account for these periods of activity as well, and automatically transfer the number of points earned in each session to the UAccess data. This distinguishes these pedometers from others available on the market, as these are capable of incorporating more forms of activity than purely walking. Due to the versatility of this pedometer, an accurate measure of the activity in an individual's day can be calculated. STEPS, through the usage of this pedometer, will accurately depict the general necessity for an increase in physical activity amongst college students.

Each participant has a daily goal of 10,000 points, optimally attained through a combination of walking and other exercise. Incentive to fully engage in the program is necessary for the ultimate shift towards healthy lifestyles amongst adults. STEPS implements a system in which small prizes are awarded upon the completion of larger goals. For example, students who earn at least 300,000 points over the span of a single month would receive a free meal from an eatery on campus. At the conclusion of the year, any student who collected a total of 2.75 million points over the course of the academic year would be awarded with a year of free fitness classes, such as Zumba, spin, yoga, or weight training, for the following school year. Although STEPS would first be implemented at the University of Arizona, the eventual goal is to become

commonplace at universities and colleges across the nation. A network of involved institutions would create a competitive atmosphere, as each student who obtained the 2.75 million point goal would count as a point for their school. At the conclusion of the academic year, the university with the highest percentage of participants who attain the goal will gain national recognition as the “Fittest College.” Along with this crowning achievement, the winning university is awarded funding exclusively for the improvement of health services provided to students.

Although some universities today provide services that help to create a healthier atmosphere, STEPS is differentiated from the competition. Many schools only offer the nutritional information for meals served, or provide wellness centers and gymnasiums for student and faculty use. Greatist, a site that ranks colleges each year in various areas, studied the opportunities provided for healthy lifestyles at different university campuses, utilizing a technique in which, "...we scored each school for its dining services (and awards), fitness facilities, health services, happiness rankings, and health and fitness initiatives" (“The 25 Healthiest Colleges in the U.S.”). The implementation of the STEPS Program would positively impact numerous aspects of their test, and could possibly expand interest in the University of Arizona amongst college applicants.

The STEPS Program provides both benefits and reasons for students to live an active and healthy lifestyle. This program incentivizes health and fitness by awarding various prizes, to include free meals and fun classes, to participants. This program will successfully promote health and fitness initially at the University of Arizona, and gradually in the nation, through its balance of simplicity and rewards for effort. College students will not be required to exert extra effort to record their physical fitness, only towards accomplishing their fitness goals. This results in a stronger feeling of satisfaction amongst participants, as all their hard work is purposeful. In

addition, this program rewards not only the individual, but the university as a whole. The United States is struggling as the number of people inflicted with health concerns grows every year.

STEPS will resolve this issue by shaping healthier lifestyles through the immediate recognition of individuals as well as universities.

In order for any product or service to be economically successful in the marketplace, it must deliver a desirable value superseding that of competitors. The STEPS Program provides a unique, fun, and competitive experience for the students at the University of Arizona, and eventually universities across the nation, to assume a healthy lifestyle. As students adopt habits throughout their college years that are commonly maintained for the rest of their lives, it is crucial to encourage behaviors that enable and prepare students for a successful and healthy future. The STEPS Program perpetuates an active lifestyle in participants, which will eventually culminate in a healthier student body. This end result is appealing to students as well as the university, making this service highly marketable for implementation. The University of Arizona funnels millions of dollars each year into the Campus Health Center, and the STEPS Program could potentially reduce the necessity for such excessive funding through its elevation of student health. Students, due to a healthier lifestyle, are expected to have a drastically reduced number of health issues requiring medical attention. Ultimately, the STEPS Program would reduce costs for both participants and the University of Arizona, while simultaneously improving current and future physical well-being of this generation.

While there are many important habits to encourage throughout a student's academic career, such as professionalism and time management, it is crucial to impress upon students the value of maintaining strong health and fitness. According to a recent study performed by Northwestern University, "more than 60 percent [of college students] don't get the recommended

levels of weekly physical activity” (Preidt). Ultimately, habitually refraining from exercise leads to a sedentary lifestyle, in which a person does not engage in any physical activity aside from his or her regular job. This lifestyle can have alarming effects on one’s health, even if a proper diet and sufficient sleep comprise the daily routine. Aside from weight gain, a sedentary lifestyle has been linked to cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, breast and colon cancers, and a higher likeliness of stroke. The University of Maryland Medical Center reports that “estimates indicate that nearly 250,000 deaths per year in the United States – about 12 percent of total deaths – are due to a lack of regular physical activity” (“Risks of Physical Inactivity”). The British medical journal *The Lancet* claims the dangers of a sedentary lifestyle are comparable to those of smoking and obesity. This staggering comparison was justified by their recent discovery that physical inactivity is the root cause of 1 in 10 deaths globally (Sloane).

In today’s era of technology, awareness of the prevalence and possible effects of this concern should be broader than ever before. Regrettably, this is not the case, and in 2013 “the national median of adults who did not engage in physical activity was 22.9%” (“Physical Inactivity”). The STEPS Program is an instrumental component in reducing this number in future years, as it would shape the outlook and priorities of students emerging into the professional adult world. Unfortunately, one National Children and Youth Fitness Study discovered that over half of youth, ages 3-18, “do not engage in physical activity that promotes long-term health” (“Risks of Physical Inactivity”). Thus, the value and importance of an active lifestyle is not stressed in the early years of an individual’s life. However, the STEPS Program would cultivate an appreciation and valuation of a healthy lifestyle amongst college students, and although this education would appear later in one’s life than considered optimal, it is much better than never

making an appearance at all. Therefore, it is necessary for the University of Arizona to lead the way in promoting a healthier lifestyle amongst this generation and those to come. Although the campus will not be beautified or materialistically improved due to this service, the overall health and wellness will be elevated beyond previous years. Good health is priceless, and additionally an extremely positive influence on other aspects of an individual's life. Through the implementation of the STEPS Program, the overall atmosphere at the University of Arizona will be improved.

A wide variety of people will gain countless benefits from the STEPS Program. This service would launch at the University of Arizona, initially impacting solely those associated with this particular college and its services. This number includes undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, staff, and administration. Currently, 31,670 undergraduate students are enrolled at the University of Arizona, in addition to the approximate 1,440 faculty members ("University of Arizona"). In the first year of the program's implementation, STEPS is estimated to obtain fifteen percent participation amongst students and twelve percent amongst professors. After the program becomes more established and gains national renown, the number is predicted to grow five percent each additional year amongst both students and professors. Thus, each year the number of people reaping the benefits from this service will grow, and the importance of a healthier lifestyle will become more widely accepted within the University of Arizona community. Furthermore, the STEPS Program will prove influential on more individuals than just those associated with the University of Arizona. As Tucson is commonly described as a "college town," those residing in this city are extremely involved and attentive to University of Arizona events and matters. The positive effects of STEPS will be witnessed by more than purely the academic community, reaching and providing a strong example to people of all age

groups of a healthy lifestyle. As health concerns and problems are mounting throughout the United States this century, more people are concerned with their physical well-being. The STEPS Program will distinguish the University of Arizona as a nationally recognized healthy institution, resulting in a spike in interested college applicants. As the health of an individual is so influential on other aspects of life, the quality of life at this university will rise tremendously. In addition to the climbing health rankings, overall rankings of the university will increase. As more students are attracted to the university, more intelligent and dynamic prospective students will seek admittance to a college with these stronger rankings. The University of Arizona will benefit within every department, as the widespread positive effects of a physically active lifestyle will radiate into more areas than simply Campus Health. The STEPS Program may become the determining factor for students deliberating amongst several colleges, making the University of Arizona more marketable to prospective students. In the first years of STEPS, this program will be a unique factor of the Wildcat experience that will not be comparable at any other university. However, one important component of the STEPS Program is the eventual spread to other academic institutions, encouraging a healthy lifestyle on a national scale. As more colleges participate, the marketability of a college will be based upon the program's success in the previous year, further incentivizing the title of "Fittest College." Ultimately, the improvement of student lives will supersede the necessity for financial compensation for the program's efforts. Additionally, as STEPS becomes more established, the annual cost of maintaining the program will diminish, reducing the cost for the university.

The consumers of the STEPS program are students and teachers at universities in which the program is employed. A crucial aspect of the program is that it is free to all participants, and only adds a slight financial burden upon the institution. Thus, STEPS accommodates well for

students as it is provided at no cost to them, requires no extra effort or exertion, is uncomplicated and not time consuming. Students benefit through healthier lifestyles, and the motivation this program sparks will be continued for the rest of participants' lives. STEPS will move across the country, as more universities and colleges adopt it, and will have a widespread effect on the nation. Future generations will be positively influenced in regards to fitness and physical activity, as their parents and role models will have been influenced by this service. The success of STEPS is extremely promising due to the minimal commitment it requires from participants, as it accounts for the physical activity they are already undertaking. This appeal will result in higher participation, and more health-conscious decisions amongst adults.

The creation and maintenance of any program requires extensive effort and collaboration amongst all parties present to ensure its success. Due to the tremendous size of the STEPS Program, a new office under the Campus Health department is necessary to ensure the effectiveness and smooth operation of each component of the service. STEPS necessitates such a large operational staff due to the many facets of the service, to include point calculations for each independent participant, coordination and maintenance of prize records, and other operational necessities such as functionality of the pedometers. Upon a project's creation, it is vital to determine who will be involved at each level and to then delegate the different aspects of the project to the respective parties. For the STEPS Program, this primarily involves the University of Arizona, all of the different health departments, especially the Recreation Center, within Campus Health, the campus eateries, and the third-party provider of the pedometers. The University administration will be responsible for the implementation of the program and cooperation with UITS for syncing the points into each participant's UAccess accounts. The STEPS Program also has to work closely with the Campus Health department and the

Recreational Center to track each form of physical activity, from walking to an aerobics class. In addition, relations with campus eateries must remain strong in order to ensure the continuation of monthly prizes for successful participants. The numerous departments necessary for success show that full collaboration across the University of Arizona is crucial for the STEPS Program to be a success.

One of the most important tasks upon the creation of STEPS is to attract sponsors for financial purposes and to gain enough national recognition that the program spreads to other college campuses. The sponsors, in addition to the financial support, will also popularize the program in the media, helping to extend STEPS to other institutions. One prospective sponsor would be First Lady Michelle Obama. She is known for her “Let’s Move” Program that promotes active lifestyles amongst American youth (“Let’s Move”). Due to the similar objectives of her program and STEPS, her support is extremely likely. The nationally competitive component of this program is not necessary for effectiveness or success at the University of Arizona, but is for a national change in adult lifestyles. Thus, the expansion of STEPS would prove beneficial as it directly impacted the lives of more people. The first step, however, is to become as influential and effective as possible at the University of Arizona. In future years, once the program has been firmly established, maximizing the intense rivalry between the University of Arizona and Arizona State University would be a strong start in program expansion. Once there is a solid competitive foundation, further expansion to other universities would be plausible and desirable. Ideally, every college campus in the United States will be engaged in the STEPS Program.

Every large-scale project must begin somewhere, and the STEPS Program would begin here at the University of Arizona. Through promotion of a healthy, active lifestyle, this service

would ultimately shape this generation's perspective and actions towards a healthy. Through the implementation of this program, the University of Arizona would truly be taking the Steps Towards Every Person Stronger to change the world.

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