



University Profile

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) partnered with HealthFitness in 2002 to manage its Zesiger Sports and Fitness Center. The fitness center complex and HealthFitness staff service 10,000 students and 4,000 faculty and staff. With nearly 1,000,000 annual visits, offerings include recreation, fitness and aquatics (including swim lessons), group exercise, personal training, massage, physical education and wellness programming.



It's providing a safe, energetic, environment for students to exercise their bodies so that they can better exercise their minds! I have loved the program. I eat healthier now thanks to my nutritionist! I know more about foods and what I'm actually ingesting, and have a better way to analyze my behaviors and patterns so I can make the best decisions for my body. The fitness classes allowed me to do more classes that fit my needs, and I didn't feel guilty about spending money on the gym.

- ENGINEERyourHEALTH PLUS Participant



Engineering wellbeing solutions at MIT

Challenge

One out of five MIT students screened positive for depression

The prevalence of mental health risks on MIT's campus, and other university campuses, is a major risk factor students face. Depression prevalence among college students is estimated to be around 17% and suicide is the second leading cause of death among individuals age 18-34.^{1,2} In 2015, MIT participated in the University of Michigan's *Healthy Minds Study* which surveys students about mental health issues. Results showed that 22% of undergraduates screened positive for depression, 17% for anxiety, 21% for non-suicidal self-injury and 10% for suicide ideation.³ In the same study, physical activity was also evaluated and 37% of undergraduates reported they averaged less than one hour of exercise per week in the last 30 days. Research has shown that physical activity is beneficial in reducing rates of depression and protecting against suicidal behavior among college students.⁴ Assisting with combatting mental health issues on the MIT campus is one of the challenges facing the HealthFitness staff.

Solution

Target mental health risk through engagement in physical activity

To address barriers students at higher risk for mental health issues were facing in getting physically active, the HealthFitness staff worked with Student Support Services to implement ENGINEERyourHEALTH PLUS, a three-year pilot program. The ENGINEERyourHEALTH PLUS program design was simple but impactful. Students seeking support are referred to the program. Referrals occur when the student identifies that physical activity, recreation and/or wellbeing services could improve their mental health. Referrals require approval from their Dean prior to activation in the program. Once in the program the HealthFitness staff worked with individuals to identify what services fit their needs and ensured the student had access free of charge. Services to target mental health and behavior change that participants had access to included group exercise, massage, nutrition services and personal training.

Results

Two years in, the ENGINEERyourHEALTH PLUS has shown positive results. Of students visiting Student Support Services, 3% were referred to the program (128 students over two years). More than 60% of students that were referred activated the services. Survey results show a meaningful impact to the students' access to the services as well as improvement in their overall wellbeing.

ENGINEER YOUR HEALTH PLUS Participant Survey

100%	Definitely or somewhat improved their feeling of well-being, ability to cope with stress and improved quality of life success
93%	Definitely or somewhat feel they learned the strong, holistic connection between mental and physical wellbeing and its impact on academic success
86%	Somewhat agree, agree or completely agree they wouldn't have used the service if it wasn't referred

About HealthFitness

HealthFitness, a Trustmark company, delivers a complete and personalized wellbeing solution that is designed to make people healthier and includes the best of fitness and recreation, wellness, injury prevention and an engaging platform. HealthFitness is URAC and NCQA accredited and a proven leader and partner for enhancing wellbeing programs and transforming lives for the better. Parent company Trustmark provides a full spectrum of employee benefits to improve wellbeing through better health and greater financial security. For more information on HealthFitness, visit www.healthfitness.com.

¹Eisenberg, D., Hunt, J., & Speer, N. (2013) Mental health in American colleges and universities: variation across student subgroups and across campuses. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases*, 201(1), 60-67.

²Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Suicide—Facts at a Glance, 2015. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/suicide-datasheet-a.pdf>.

³Office of the Chancellor. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. (2015) The Healthy Minds Study 2015 Survey Results. Available at: http://chancellor.mit.edu/sites/default/files/pdf/HMS_MIT_2015_Results.pdf. Accessed June 6, 2019.

⁴Taliaferro, L., Rienze, B., Pigg Jr, R., Miller, M., & Dodd, V. Associations Between Physical Activity and Reduced Rates of Hopelessness, Depression, and Suicidal Behavior Among College Students. *Journal of American College Health*, 57(4), 427-435.



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