Introduction

• As obesity levels continue to rise across the country, physical activity is all the more important in preventing and combatting this public health issue.

• Physical activity levels are commonly measured through the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) and then given a score. When asked about influences on physical activity, the majority reported 30-80 having an open, safe, and welcoming exercise environment, as well as 90-100 gender.

• The objective of this study is to examine the environmental influences across campus on physical activity levels among college students.

Methods

• Students at a large, Appalachian university completed a 118-question online questionnaire distributed through campus email on perceptions of health and resources across campus.

• Questions were generally about physical activity levels, perceptions of weight status, perceptions of campus health facilities and resources, eating habits, food insecurity, mental health symptoms, and drug and alcohol use.

• IPAQ scores were determined based on the sum of self-reported, weekly total physical activity in terms of walking, moderate and vigorous activities.

• Frequency, bivariate, and multiple linear regression analyses were used.

Results

• Respondents (n=1758) had an average IPAQ score of 2259.07±1714.29 MET•min/week and were predominantly females (67.4%).

• When asked about influences on physical activity, the majority reported either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the following:

- Having options on campus to be physically active (71.39%)
- Seeing people being physically active on campus (86.46%)
- Feeling welcome to use the rec center (74.47%)
- Having club/intramural sports available (89.61%)
- The rec center having working equipment (88.44%)
- The rec center having working equipment (88.44%)
- Having plenty of options on campus to be physically active (75.39%)
- Rec center having working equipment (88.44%)
- Seeing people be physically active on campus (86.46%)
- Friends having a positive influence (56.96%)
- Having a positive influence on IPAQ scoring (p<0.0001)

All variables had a significant influence on IPAQ scores in bivariate analysis (p<0.01 for all).

• In addition, females had lower than average IPAQ scores (2061.32±49.99 MET•min/week) and males had average scores (2659.19±73.26 MET•min/week), with significant difference (p<0.0001).

• The following remained significant when entered into a multiple linear regression:

- Having options on campus to be physically active (p<0.0001)
- Feeling welcome to use the rec center (p<0.0001)
- Having plenty of options on campus to be physically active (p=0.0395)
- Gender (p<0.0001)

Discussion

• The results show that it is important to college students that not only are friends a source of motivation in being physically active, but also the sight of peers they do not know being active.

• Having an open, safe, and welcoming exercise environment, as well as different options is also important to college students being physically active.

• Females are not being as physically active as males, reporting IPAQ scores below the campus average. Males, on the other hand, are reporting higher than campus average IPAQ scores.

Conclusions

• Campus recreation centers should promote a welcoming and safe environment, and provide numerous options, including and especially group classes, to increase the number of students getting adequate physical activity.

• It is also essential that campus centers work to advocate for physical activity among young women.

References