



A photograph of an outdoor fitness area at Vanguard University. In the foreground, there is a piece of blue and black exercise equipment on a green artificial turf surface. The equipment has a black vertical post and a blue horizontal bar with a circular disc attached. In the background, there is a large tree, a paved area, and a building with a yellow and blue mural. A dark pickup truck is parked in the distance. The sky is clear and blue.

EXPLORING OUTDOOR FITNESS

AT VANGUARD UNIVERSITY
AND RICE UNIVERSITY

by Sheila Wagner



Outdoor Fitness

The advantages of exercise are far reaching and important. Everything from healthier skin to brain health, from stress reduction to increased happiness, from bone strength and muscle development to reducing risks of chronic diseases—it's all dependent on exercise.

Everyone knows that regular physical exercise is essential to good health in people of every age. Most people also know that if the exercise is monotonous and boring, it's not likely to become a lifelong habit. If a person of college age can find a way to enjoy physical activity, chances are good that they will make it a priority to achieve fitness and longevity.

Outdoor vs. Indoor

A lot of private colleges and universities offer excellent indoor exercise facilities that can benefit their students, faculty and staff with everything they need to increase blood flow, improve cardiovascular health, improve strength, endurance, flexibility, and more. Exercising outdoors provides all these things plus the added benefit of fresh air and exposure to sunlight which increases levels of vitamin D.

The distractions of an outdoor fitness park can make people take their minds off the "work" of working out. Trees, birds, and other aspects of a natural environment make one less focused on tiredness and muscle aches. Additionally, research has shown that exercisers burn ten percent more calories when they do the same exercise outside instead of in an inside gym.

NIGHTLOCK® LOCKDOWN SECURE CLASSROOM IN SECONDS



SIMPLE · FAST · SECURE FOR EXTREME EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

The Nightlock Lockdown Door Barricade allows a teacher to immediately lock the door from inside the classroom, eliminating exposure during a hostile intruder situation. This device makes it virtually impossible for an intruder to break through an entry door.

- Simply add this safety device to classroom doors
- Works with outward and inward swing doors
- No need to replace existing hardware
- One time solution - easy to install
- Lockdown in seconds

NIGHTLOCK
classroomlockdown.com
CALL TOLL FREE 1-855-644-4856



So affordable!
\$59.95
ea.

Brain And Body

Another benefit of nature's stimulation is that it impacts the brain in positive ways. It has been said that outdoor exercise stimulates all five senses in a way that indoor activities can't. Danny Dryer, founder of ChiWalking, suggests that breathing in fresh air, feeling the ground under your feet, and taking in all the colors and sounds in nature are positive stimulants hitting you at the same time. He believes that you can't help but feel better about yourself and the world around you after outdoor exercising.

Exercise enthusiasts often claim that the addition of nature and fresh air helps make exercising more fun and therefore more effective. Combining outdoor exercise, natural light and sensory stimulation has been proven to reduce stress and encourage healthy behaviors. Students who use outdoor fitness parks often socialize while exercising which strengthens campus community and interpersonal relationships.

Vanguard University's Fitness Facility

Vanguard University in Orange County, California, is a private university that has an outdoor fitness facility, which is open to the entire Vanguard community and scheduled for certain physical activity classes. It allows free access and is only supervised when used for an activity, class, or team practice. It has shaded areas to shield from the hottest part of the day as well as lighting when used at evenings and nights.

Gabriel Corona is the Assistant Director of Campus Safety and as an adjunct professor in the kinesiology department. He shared that there can be eight to ten different stations set up for use in the area.



Photo courtesy Vanguard University



**If You Build it
They Will Come**



800-776-1342

info@ListIndustries.com

ListIndustries.com





Photo courtesy Rice University

“The biggest benefit to this space is that it is outdoors. Students spend most of their time inside a classroom, so being able to get your workout in by getting outside to enjoy the breeze and sunlight is great for both mental and physical fitness,” Corona noted. He added, “The Campus Safety Department has started using the fitness facility on our breaks throughout our shifts, performing pull-ups, dips, pushups, and sit ups.”

Rice University's Outdoor Training Park

Last year Rice University in Houston, Texas, opened their Outdoor Training Park as part of the Barbara and David Gibbs Recreation and Wellness Center. While Houston has a very hot and humid climate with the late spring, summer, and early fall months being especially hard on outdoor exercisers, planners at Rice made it a priority to locate the park in an area with enough shade that people could continue to use it through all seasons.

Tina Villard, senior associate athletic director and director of recreation at Gibbs, said that building the Outdoor Training Park was a way for them to increase accessibility to physical fitness. “You don’t need a membership to use it, it gives people another option other than using our weight room, allows people to work out outdoors, is easily accessible, and allows users a wider array of choices for activities,” Villard added.

The OTP has plenty of pieces of stationary equipment that allows for a well-rounded workout. Additionally, the stations meet the needs of all abilities and fitness levels, from beginner to expert. All of the stations also include instructions and suggested exercises to provide support for users.

The park was placed close to a running trail so runners and walkers could stop by to include strength-based activities in their workout. “We know that people want and need options in order to build a healthy lifestyle,” Villard concluded, “and the OTP is just one more way we can encourage that behavior.”

The students at Vanguard University and Rice University are lucky to have access to outdoor fitness as part of their overall exercise routines.



Select IPI by Bison for your custom ceiling and wall mounted basketball backstops, divider curtains and, batting cages, wall padding and gym accessories. Visit www.IPIbyBison.com or call 800-637-7968.



OFFICIAL PARTNER

Divider Curtains & Batting Cages

Building or renovating a gymnasium?



Ceiling & Wall Mounted Backstops



Volleyball Systems



Wall Padding



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Sheila Wagner has spent the last several years working as a professional editor and recently became the staff writer for *Private University Products and News*. Wagner can be reached at sheila@pupnmag.com.

*Discover the Difference
with Carts from*

ROYAL
BASKET TRUCKS

800-426-6447

www.royal-basket.com

