





WHY COMPREHENSIVE FITNESS SCREENING REALLY MATTERS

by Rob Rideout

As a graduate of a private liberal arts university, I am pleased to offer the following brief insights into related areas which I have dedicated my entire professional career to promoting, namely, improving population health, community fitness standards, and encouraging sound wellness behaviors. These areas of focus can empower individuals to set their own personal fitness and health goals so they too can realize realistic and reliable results through their dedicated efforts. In an information age where outcomes really do matter, a comprehensive fitness screening will help students to better understand what it means to be physically fit and motivate them to improve or maintain a much higher level of physical fitness and overall health.



PHOTO COURTESY MICROFIT

Know Your Numbers

Most of us have seen those pharmaceutical commercials advising us to "know your numbers," which generally relates to our blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose, A1C, BMI, etc. Health Insurance companies and medical providers have also stressed this same message to the people they underwrite and serve in order to presumably save us all a lot of money.

Yet, in spite of this seemingly sound advice, the fact remains that general health trends among college students have been in decline for decades. This statement is supported by two of our prominent collegiate customers who have, in fact, published longitudinal studies of their student's fitness levels and trends over twelve- and fifteen-year periods. No real surprises here because the overall health of Americans, in general, has also been in rapid decline. This data reveals a serious threat to our economic security as the percentage of medical costs in relation to GDP has risen precipitously over the same period of time.

Merely knowing these specific numbers really doesn't address the root problem. This approach to public health has fallen very short

of the mark. The strategy of "knowing your numbers" has really become more about disease management, expensive medical procedures, and the dissemination of sometimes dangerous prescription drugs to deal with the symptoms rather than the actual causes of these various disease states. The focus of healthcare often becomes far less about preventing disease in the first place.

On the other hand, if there were more qualified personal trainers, nutrition counselors, and effective community-based wellness programs, we might rarely need to be talking about "knowing your numbers" at all. While disease treatment is helpful, prevention of disease is an even better strategy.

Despite these problems, the good news is that we can still be part of the solution. Even now our medical communities are starting to take seriously the "Exercise is Medicine" initiative championed by the American College of Sports Medicine and supported by others such as the Medical Fitness Association, National Wellness Institute, and the Cooper Institute of Aerobic Research, to name a few. Interestingly enough, even third-party medical reimbursement is beginning to be contingent on the success of

medical doctors themselves, who are being required to achieve positive outcomes from their treatment programs; this approach is a huge step in the right direction. These less expensive and more effective treatment solutions are now being promoted under such names as Integrative Medicine or Lifestyle Medicine, as well as Alternative Medicine.

A key component of Alternative Medicine is regular exercise; thus, measuring outcomes is essential; doing so should be our focus and the basis of a comprehensive screening. Therefore, let's focus on the numbers that relate to a fit and healthy lifestyle. Let's discuss blood pressure and how proper exercise and sound nutrition can help to control weight and normalize blood pressure. Let's explain how accurate estimates of body composition are much more reliable than a generalized BMI measurement. Let's stress the importance of Max VO₂ scores and aerobic capacity for improved endurance and a healthy metabolism. Let's demonstrate how strength training with the resulting muscle gains improve metabolically active tissue to burn calories. Finally, let's demonstrate how proper flexibility training can prevent many athletic and other nagging injuries to improve

overall mobility and performance in our daily lives. These are the most essential biometrics which should be included in a well-defined and comprehensive fitness screening format.

Fitness Assessment Basics

Quality fitness facilities have long recognized that comprehensive fitness screenings are an essential member service. Many student recreation centers which I have personally visited over the past several years are now embracing this approach, along with a more holistic understanding of their students' need to be physically fit and healthy, to enhance their total campus life experience.

This assessment starts with the way students are introduced to knowing more about their fitness level with a quality fitness screening. The language used in the screening is very important. Many students may not feel particularly comfortable with their current fitness level or body image, which can be a major hurdle for them to overcome, so avoiding the word *test*, as in fitness testing, is a good strategy. Students are very aware that

one can fail a test and this negative connotation can be easily overcome by using more neutral terms such as "assessment," "evaluation," or "fitness profile."

Next, the assessment should be comprehensive enough to provide students with a complete overview of their fitness status, including Blood Pressure, Resting Heart Rate, Height, Weight, Body Composition, Aerobic Fitness (estimated Max VO₂), Flexibility, and Strength measurements. The results should be expressed in a concise, easy to understand report with practical, science-based recommendations to improve or to maintain their current fitness level.

Fitness assessments should be conducted by a qualified individual. Fortunately, most colleges and universities have their own academic departments (Kinesiology, Exercise & Sports Sciences, etc.) that can train staff or even supply qualified student interns to help provide these services for both students and faculty. These individuals will also gain a practical hands-on experience to prepare them for future employment.

Quality fitness facilities have long recognized that comprehensive fitness screenings are an essential member service. Many student recreation centers are now embracing this approach, along with a more holistic understanding of their student's need to be physically fit and healthy, to enhance their total campus life experience.



Summer 2021 Update

MicroFit welcomes **Emory University** and **Florida State University** to our growing list of colleges and universities relying on MicroFit's premier fitness assessment platform for higher education fitness, wellness, and recreational programs.

If you are considering upgrading your fitness assessment programs to an elite standard, contact MicroFit today to discuss how we can help you transform your college's fitness assessments for optimal performance.



Ask MicroFit how we can help improve your campus wellness program!

800-822-0405

info@microfit.com

www.microfit.com/campus-wellness

It is equally important for these academically trained and enthusiastic fitness advisors to simplify their explanations. Students really want to know how they compare to credible national standards as set forth by the A.C.S.M. Most students do not want a complicated physiology lesson or to feel shamed by an overly zealous fitness critic. A better strategy is to start out by discussing their strengths as indicated in their fitness profile report and then move into discussing one or two areas where the student can begin to make measurable improvements.

Obviously, positive and realistic goal setting is particularly important when reviewing the fitness profile report. From this process, an exercise program can be discussed which will fit into the student's schedule and help them achieve their short term goals. This action plan should also include an opportunity to reschedule a follow-up assessment within sixty to ninety days. By then, most students will likely see some progress, and this successful experience will help to keep them motivated, involved, and more inclined to promote the program to

their friends and acquaintances. Remember that those who are at greatest risk with conditions such as obesity, hypertension, or diabetes may require more consistent monitoring, while those who are already athletic and exercise regularly may not need similar attention. The goal here is to provide a sustainable graded exercise program, demonstrate measurable progress, and get those at highest risk to really begin to enjoy and benefit from their exercise routines.

On a final note, prior to COVID-19, college and university students often took a more casual attitude toward their general health and fitness. They didn't see an urgency to make the necessary lifestyle changes in their handling of stress, their eating habits, or their exercise routines. Many students are now much more aware that the people most at risk for any virus or disease are those who have co-morbidity issues such as obesity, hypertension, or diabetes. So the opportunity for physical-education-related classes, wellness programs, and campus recreation centers to promote a more effective wellness-messaging campaign should be

obvious. Therefore, a comprehensive fitness screening should be seriously considered to allow tracking of student progress toward their goals. Now that Gen Z is attending (or thinking of enrolling in) college, everything from program offerings to institutional priorities are evolving. Providing an exceptional student experience on every level is clearly essential. In the era of sustainability and green movements, higher education institutions are starting to "go green" to not only help our planet, but also to seize an opportunity to attract students by providing them with even more tools and support to live the green lifestyle they value.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Rob Rideout has been a successful high school teacher, winning wrestling coach, sports conditioning consultant to several professional teams, keynote motivational speaker, corporate wellness consultant, and Co-founder of MicroFit, Inc. in 1986.

AquaticAccess.com

Simpler is Smarter

Water flows in - the seat goes up
Water flows out - the seat goes down

No electricity, batteries, charging, remotes, actuators, contacts, solar cells, gears, motors, brushes, oils, pumps, or extensive maintenance schedules

**800.325.LIFT
502.425.5817**

*"Our students love our lift!
It's easy maintenance, actually no maintenance.
It's a wonderful product. Get one!"*

Karen Sato, Gavilan College, Gilroy, CA

YOU SHOULD HAVE USED STERIFAB

Smelly backpack
Fleas/Ticks
Mold
Bacteria/Mildew
BED BUGS

STERI-FAB®

MUCH MORE THAN A DISINFECTANT

800 359-4913 • STERIFAB.COM



Super SAM[®] 125

Whether you're in an apartment, condominium, hotel, office building, media room or a children's play area... peace and quiet is possible.

Super SAM 125 sound abatement membrane ensures you won't have to hear it to believe it!



CERTIFIED
CLEAN AIR GOLD

