



A man with a beard, wearing a blue t-shirt and dark shorts, is running on a treadmill. The treadmill is positioned in front of a large, multi-paned window that lets in bright natural light. The background wall is made of rough, grey stone blocks. The treadmill has a black frame and a brown perforated side panel.

FITNESS

A GREEN PATHWAY

TO CONNECT, INSPIRE
AND ENCOURAGE
STUDENTS

by Ruben Mejia



The green movement continues to gain traction worldwide. Sustainability is becoming a central ethos, embraced across all sectors, higher education included. Millennials and Generation Z (Gen Z) are actively demonstrating that they have the will, knowledge, and capacity to promote lasting positive change for our environment; these generations take pride in knowing which brands, organizations, and even colleges and universities are actively seeking out alternative green solutions.

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 to seize an opportunity to attract students by providing them with even more tools and support to live the green lifestyle they value.

In a 2019 *Princeton Review*, 64% of applicants surveyed (approximately 12,000) would factor in schools' environmental commitments when deciding where to attend. Looking beyond recycling programs and solar panels, colleges and universities should explore alternative green programs and initiatives. One area is through campus recreation centers—these large spaces provide an untapped opportunity for administrators to create a green fitness experience that can build a greater sense of community among the student body across campus.

Many colleges and universities are offering grants or other funding options for sustainable

solutions, thereby reducing—and sometimes eliminating—the cost burden for the recreation department. One alternative funding opportunity is coming from student government initiatives that support sustainable efforts throughout campuses. As energy costs continue to rise—and recent studies showing 47% of recreation facilities being accountable for annual building energy—installing self-powered cardio equipment can be a natural fit for a variety of initiatives college and university campuses want to undertake.

The energy savings help attract today's green-minded students to the fitness center. Traditional treadmills use about one kilowatt an hour on average, which is equivalent to a refrigerator running for five hours. However, innovative solution like the energy-generating ECO-POWER™ treadmills from SportsArt converts up to 74% of



human energy into usable electricity. As a result, one treadmill reduces the need to buy that one kilowatt from the electric company, while generating up to an additional 200 watt-hours. That means a single student on a single energy-generating cardio equipment can create a net positive 1.2 kilowatts of electricity per hour.

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is important to students, both prior to their enrollment and after graduation. In fact, 68% of students report campus recreation facilities influence their decision of which college or university to attend. Participating in recreation activities and programs expands interest in staying fit and healthy. Campus Recreation Centers are so much more than just fitness facilities. They have evolved into places where students can connect and interact with friends in a safe and

positive environment. These facilities not only have an impact on various health and wellness outcomes for students but they provide a sense of community where students can workout, reduce stress, try new activities, relax, and have fun.

On-campus recreation centers are used by as many as 75% of students. By leveraging emerging technologies, higher education institutions can reshape how students foster positive, sustainable outcomes through their overall health and wellness on campus. Your recreation and wellness centers on campus can become another component of holistic development for students. Eco-friendly athletic and recreation centers give campuses the ability to demonstrate the direct impact of being environmentally conscious and instill a greater sense of pride on campus.

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Behind the scenes, energy-saving and energy-generation help reduce costs and offset carbon footprint. But these digital integrations can bring that information forward and put it on display to leverage sustainability efforts and show students exactly how they're helping power the planet. Combined, these initiatives can provide students with a sense of ownership in helping give back. Participants can see what they are generating—in terms of energy savings—therefore helping the campus community and beyond. This realization is something that can transcend students' time on campus. Going

green is a process that the college, recreation center, and students can all take pride in. New developments and innovation in energy-generating cardio equipment and dedicated integrations and applications will give campus rec directors even more opportunities to engage students in fresh and meaningful ways. As sustainability continues to grow in importance, the evolution of technology has made it possible for students, facility, and staff to engage with greener solutions for a better tomorrow.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Ruben Mejia is the executive vice president for SportsArt Americas, previously holding the title of chief technology officer. In 2000, after four years of active deployment in the military, Mejia began working in the corporate IT and telecommunication fields for the U.S. Army, launching his career and interest in the technology industry as a whole. Prior to joining SportsArt, Mejia held executive roles within the technology and ecommerce spaces.

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