

***Health: A Cornerstone to Success
Education: A Cornerstone to Health***

Consortium: Oregon Community Colleges Health, Fitness and Wellness Education 2006

Position statement:

Community Colleges in Oregon should maintain or add a *minimum* of one 3 credit Health Education course to the AAOT requirement.

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Dear Administrators and state representatives,

Community Colleges in Oregon have always taken a progressive approach in educating students fully and preparing them to be a healthy citizen and part of a thriving workforce. As the statistics and surveys have shown recently though, we as a state are falling behind in our support for educational programs that emphasize the importance of personal health, fitness and wellness and therefore we have contributed to an obese workforce with effects on reliability and the success of our state businesses.

According to the Centers for Disease Control's most recently national survey, Oregon ranks last among western states in the health and wellbeing of its citizens. Lack of an active lifestyle, the inability to make healthy decisions, as well as Oregonians lower level of understanding of the comprehensive nature of human health needs are largely to blame for these statistics. Clearly, the facts speak for themselves and demonstrate a need for community colleges to include a health education requirement within the framework of our state degree transfer programs. Our consortium is a unified group of community college educators from across the state. We are asking that proactive steps be taken to ensure that a comprehensive health education requirement exists for both student learning and the wellbeing of our future workforce. The CDC study makes it even more imperative that we recognize both our opportunity and responsibility to create improvements in the wellness of our communities in Oregon. Implementing a statewide health ed. requirement, which ensures that all students can demonstrate basic critical thinking skills, will help to decrease the growing health care costs and the obesity epidemic while creating a brighter future for our citizens and businesses.

The AAOT degree is one aspect of the community college that fills a need for a vast array of individuals; those pursuing this degree make up a large percentage of the full time students at each of our schools. These are the students who often take a health education class because of the AAOT requirement that many community colleges have in place yet, may not have done so otherwise. They are also the same students who come back to the instructors long after the class is over and express how grateful they are for the benefits they have gained in their lives through learning about prevention, physical activity/fitness, behavior change and the many other wellness concepts that create well rounded, fit individuals. Without

making this type of requirement, we will continue to see the health of our communities spiral downward as more of our adult population becomes uninformed about and disconnected from the lifestyle decisions and choices that will most benefit them. What kind of behaviors and attitudes about health do we want our future leaders, business people and the workforce of our state to be modeling in the future, more of the same or something better?

Healthy Communities = Healthy Economy

The primary question we would ask of our leaders is; “What is more important than our health?” The answer, although obvious, is often overlooked or forgotten. This consortium of 17 Oregon community college Health, Fitness and Wellness programs, has a strong belief that it is time for us to get the message out that health education is **vital** to a thriving future and a critically needed component in educating students and ensuring a healthy and sustainable community. Below is a short list of the benefits of fully promoting these important Health and Wellness education courses.

Benefits:

- Lower risk of heart disease (number one cause of death in U.S.)
- Decreased overall stress levels leading to better health outcomes in all areas of one's life
- Overall awareness of physical fitness and how this works to create healthier and happy lives
- More effective student learning in other classes, better memory, higher test scores, increased productivity, improved creativity and alertness, which then transfers to a healthier future workforce.
- FTE while saving the college dollars in overall expenditures (HPE classes are typically cost effective.)
- Decreased health care costs when citizens from our communities are making healthy choices and actively preventing disease by promoting wellness in their lives.
- Increased profit and productivity for business due to fewer health related injuries and sick days by workforce.
- A message created statewide that we are promoting the health of our communities and that we would like Oregon to become a leader in the west in educating and caring for its citizens health and future workforce.

***Health Education definition= wellness and fitness classes that specifically work to increase the wellbeing of people, modify behavior and develop critical thinking skills in the following areas; physical, social, intellectual, emotional, psychological, occupational and spiritual health.**

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Chemeketa, Mt. Hood, Clatsop, Portland, Lane, Southwestern Oregon, Linn Benton, Umpqua, Central Oregon, Clackamas, Rogue, Klamath

(June 2006: All Oregon Community Colleges have been contacted regarding joining in to the consortium position.)