

2022- 2023

ANNUAL REPORT

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MISSION

The department of Fitness and Recreation is focused on providing diverse programs, services, and educational opportunities to enhance the lifelong health and wellness of the university community. Fit+Rec strives to provide a one-of-a-kind health and wellness lifestyle for every student, faculty, and staff member. These efforts uphold the department's mission statement which is guided by three goals:

1. Provide opportunities and support to promote a healthy university community,
2. Benefit the university community through health education, and
3. Develop university relations through health and wellness activities.

This annual report showcases ongoing initiatives including the influence of Fitness and Recreation on both the university and the local community. Our dedication lies in enhancing campus diversity, fostering inclusivity, and advancing student achievement through exceptional fitness programs that inspire well-being.



Best,
Amy M. Davenport, Ph.D.
Director of Fitness and Recreation

FIT+REC EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fit+Rec had a strong year in 2022–23 with facility, activity, and student employee experience improvements. In the spring of 2022, the Student Government Association funded sport lights at the Recreation Fields. Purchasing, planning, and installation of the lights lasted until February 2023 due to continued supply chain issues for electrical components. When the fields opened for the first student intramural games with lights, the drive behind the improvement was realized. More students were able to participate as recreation time no longer conflicted with their academic schedule. The field lights created a greater opportunity for students to participate with over 2,000 more participants than the prior year in the short time they were available.

Another facility improvement implemented this year was the movement of the F45 studio from a racquetball court to the large, corner studio at the building's entrance. This change nearly doubled the number of participants that could take an F45 class at a time compared to the prior year. Through this change, more people participated in fitness programming, increasing participation by nearly 6,000 visits.





A student employee survey indicated the need for higher pay and conversations with student employees indicated the need for more flexibility with their uniforms. A pay increase was implemented in the summer for lifeguards, and all other employees will begin the fall 2023 semester with an increase. Further, the student uniform requirement for facilities attendants was loosened to provide greater personalization while maintaining clothes appropriate during emergency response.

The student employee experience was reviewed from the beginning with the application and interview processes. NACE skills for Fit+Rec student positions were listed within job descriptions. During the interview process, staff reviewed the positions as well as skills students will have the opportunities to develop. In a survey of student employees, those participating indicated they developed improvements in the NACE skills through their employment including, but not limited to, communication, critical thinking, leadership, professionalism, equity and inclusion, and teamwork.

While strides have been made with facilities, activities, and student employee experiences, a challenge that remains persistent is staffing particular student positions including lifeguards and water safety instructors. The student population on campus in the summer has dropped nearly 50% since summer 2019 with the onset of online classes. Online classes are valuable for students as they provide great flexibility, however, if non-academic, on-campus summer programs are to continue, solutions need to be identified. Unfortunately, recruiting lifeguards and water safety instructors through the larger-Norman community have proven ineffective as other, local water parks and pools are able to pay approximately \$2-3 more per hour. Fit+Rec continues to progress with ways to increase student employee pay.

Student employee pay is a priority this new academic year in order to help with retention and recruitment. Faculty/Staff membership rates as well as the F45 membership rates have been increased, effective August 1, to help with this goal. This is a small increase to help create a better student employee experience. Through reflection on assessment, department needs, and the development of a vision moving forward, Fit+Rec served students well with available resources in 2022-23.



CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE INSTITUTION

This year, Fitness and Recreation honed learning outcomes to better reflect the skills that the National Associate of Colleges and Employers (NACE) seeks in recently graduated employees. These include:

- **Critical Thinking:** Identify and respond to needs based upon an understanding of situational context and logical analysis of relevant information.
- **Communication:** Clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, facts, and perspectives with persons inside and outside of an organization.
- **Teamwork:** Build and maintain collaborative relationships to work effectively toward common goals, while appreciating diverse viewpoints and shared responsibilities.
- **Technology:** Understand and leverage technologies ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals.
- **Leadership:** Recognize and capitalize on personal and team strengths to achieve organizational goals.
- **Professionalism:** Knowing work environments differ greatly, understand and demonstrate effective work habits, and act in the interest of the larger community and workplace.
- **Career and Self Development:** Proactively develop oneself and one's career through continual personal and professional learning, awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, navigation of career opportunities, and networking to build relationships within and without one's organization.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Demonstrate the awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills required to equitably engage and include people from different local and global cultures. Engage in anti-racist practices that actively challenge the systems, structures, and policies of racism.



These goals can all be grouped into the Student Affairs Learning Goals of Personal Development, Well-Being, and Community Impact. Further, the Learning Outcomes established for Fit+Rec student employees aligns with the “Lead On, University” plan in that through employment with the department, training includes leadership, intercultural competence, teamwork, career management skills, workflow planning, communication, and emergency response, all through which transferable skills are developed.

Strategies used include posting the NACE transferable skills in student job postings so that from the beginning, student employees have an expectation about what they will receive from employment with the department in addition to a paycheck. Further, the skills were directly incorporated into job interviews, Canvas trainings, and student employee evaluations.

To highlight learning outcomes and strategies, for the NACE skills, Fit+Rec set 90% of all respondents to the student employee survey as the benchmark as this is the first year of implementation. The results are as follows:

Critical Thinking

87% of all student staff participating in the end of the year survey reported they gained critical thinking skills as a result of their employment experience with Fit+Rec.

99% of all student staff participating in the end of the year survey reported they gained problem solving/decision making skills as a result of their employment experience with Fit+Rec.

Communication

94% of all student staff participating in the end of the year survey reported they gained verbal communication skills as a result of their employment experience with Fit+Rec.

Teamwork

99% of all student staff participating in the end of the year survey reported they gained teamwork skills as a result of their employment experience with Fit+Rec.

81% of all student staff participating in the end of the year survey reported they gained written communication skills as a result of their employment experience with Fit+Rec.

Leadership

93% of all student staff participating in the end of the year survey reported they gained leadership skills as a result of their employment experience with Fit+Rec.

Professionalism

97% of all student staff participating in the end of the year survey reported they gained workflow planning skills as a result of their employment experience with Fit+Rec.

93% of all student staff participating in the end of the year survey reported they gained time management skills as a result of their employment experience with Fit+Rec.

92% of all student staff participating in the end of the year survey reported they gained customer service skills as a result of their employment experience with Fit+Rec.

96% of all student staff participating in the end of the year survey reported they gained emergency response skills as a result of their employment experience with Fit+Rec.

Career and Self Development

87% of all student staff participating in the end of the year survey reported they gained career management skills as a result of their employment experience with Fit+Rec.

Equity and Inclusion

93% of all student staff participating in the end of the year survey reported they gained intercultural competence skills as a result of their employment experience with Fit+Rec.

97% of all student staff participating in the end of the year survey who help to create the environment for all students reported that Fit+Rec provides an inclusive work environment for student employees.

HIGHLIGHTS

Narratives of most successful strategies

Communicating to students the value of working for Fitness and Recreation beyond the paycheck by relating transferable skills to the positions and helping students to connect how those skills relate to jobs beyond college. This is done through the application process, staff training, one-on-one discussions with student staff, and evaluations. This flows directly into the Lead On, University plan as it

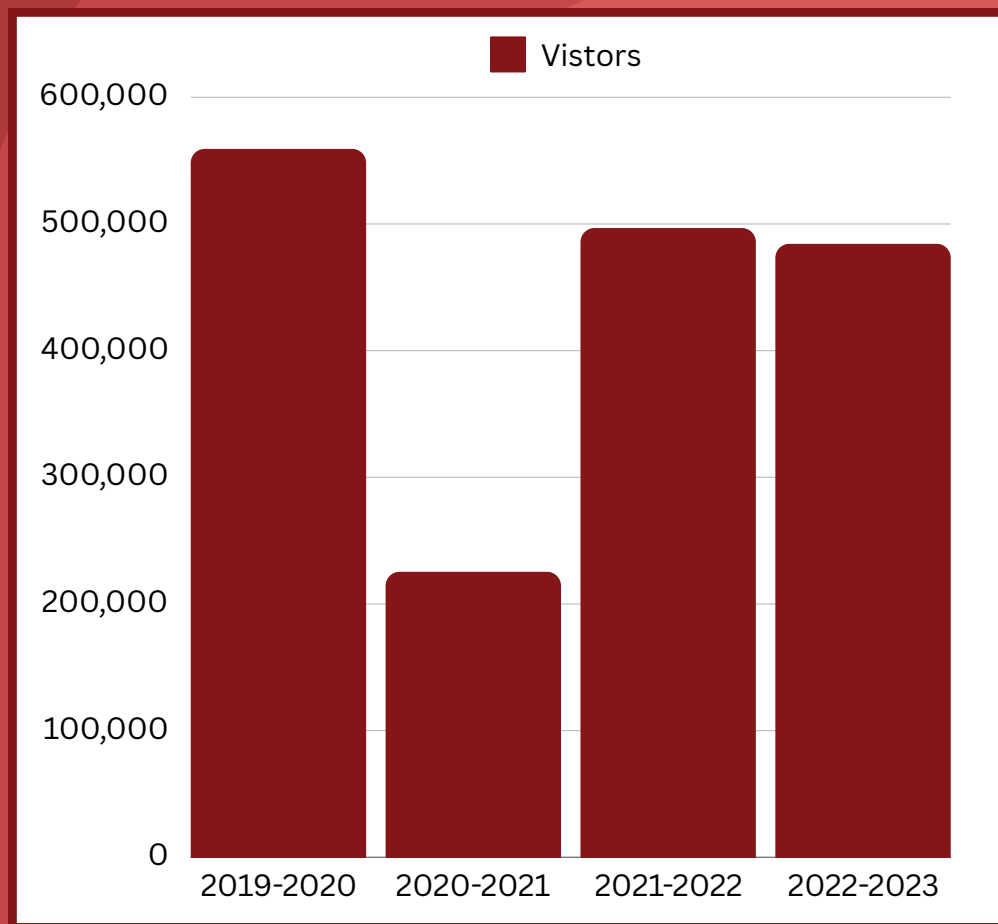
Working with students in 2022 to envision Recreation Field lights and how they could benefit students. Student Government Association provided funding in 2022. The project was completed in February 2023 with more students exploring Intramural Sports and recognizing that the evening games work better for their academic schedules than games prior to light installment.

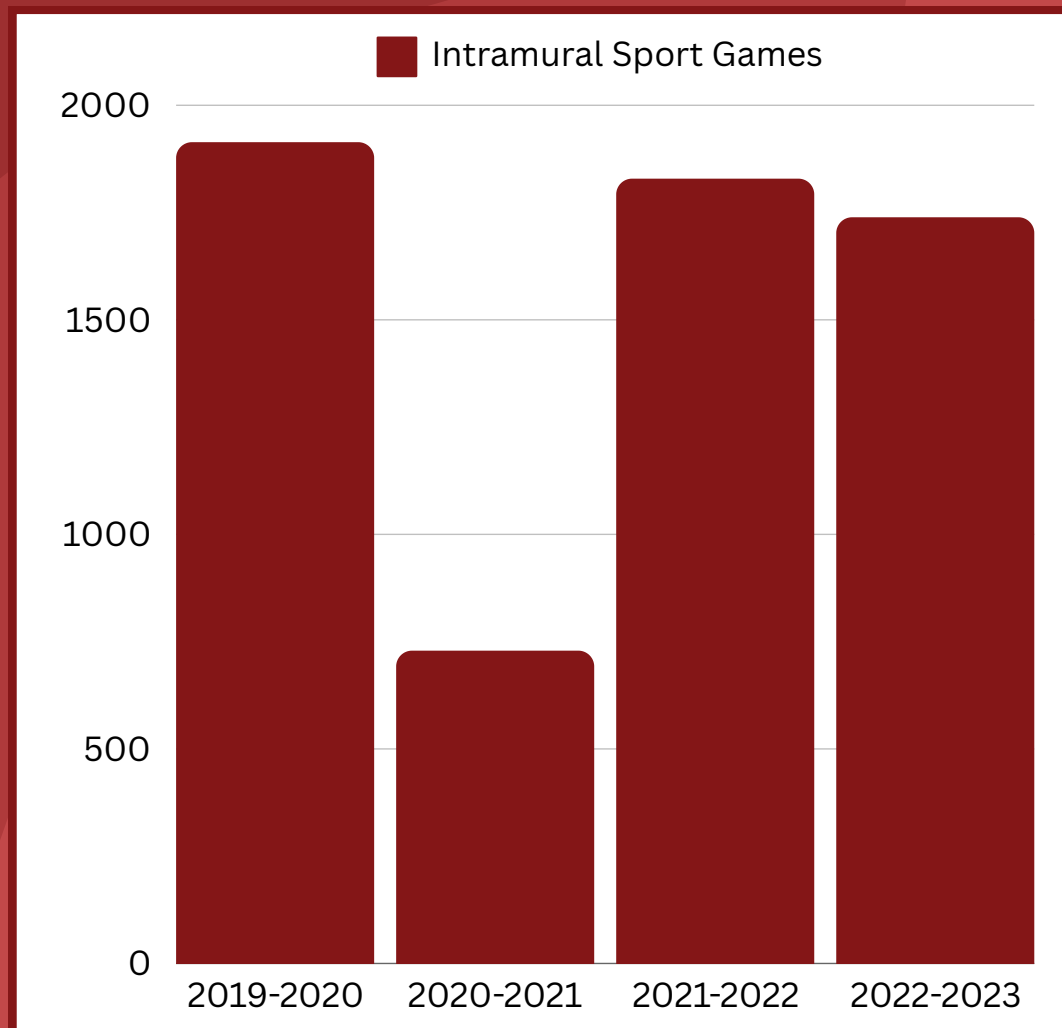


Key Performance Indicators (plan for 2023)

The Key Performance Indicators (KPI) that have been harvested include Facilities Visitors, Intramural Sports Games, and Training, Swimming, and Life-Saving Classes. However, these numbers may make programs look as if they are declining when, in fact, they are prospering. For all numbers, reasons behind changes must be explored. For the current reporting year, those explanations include:

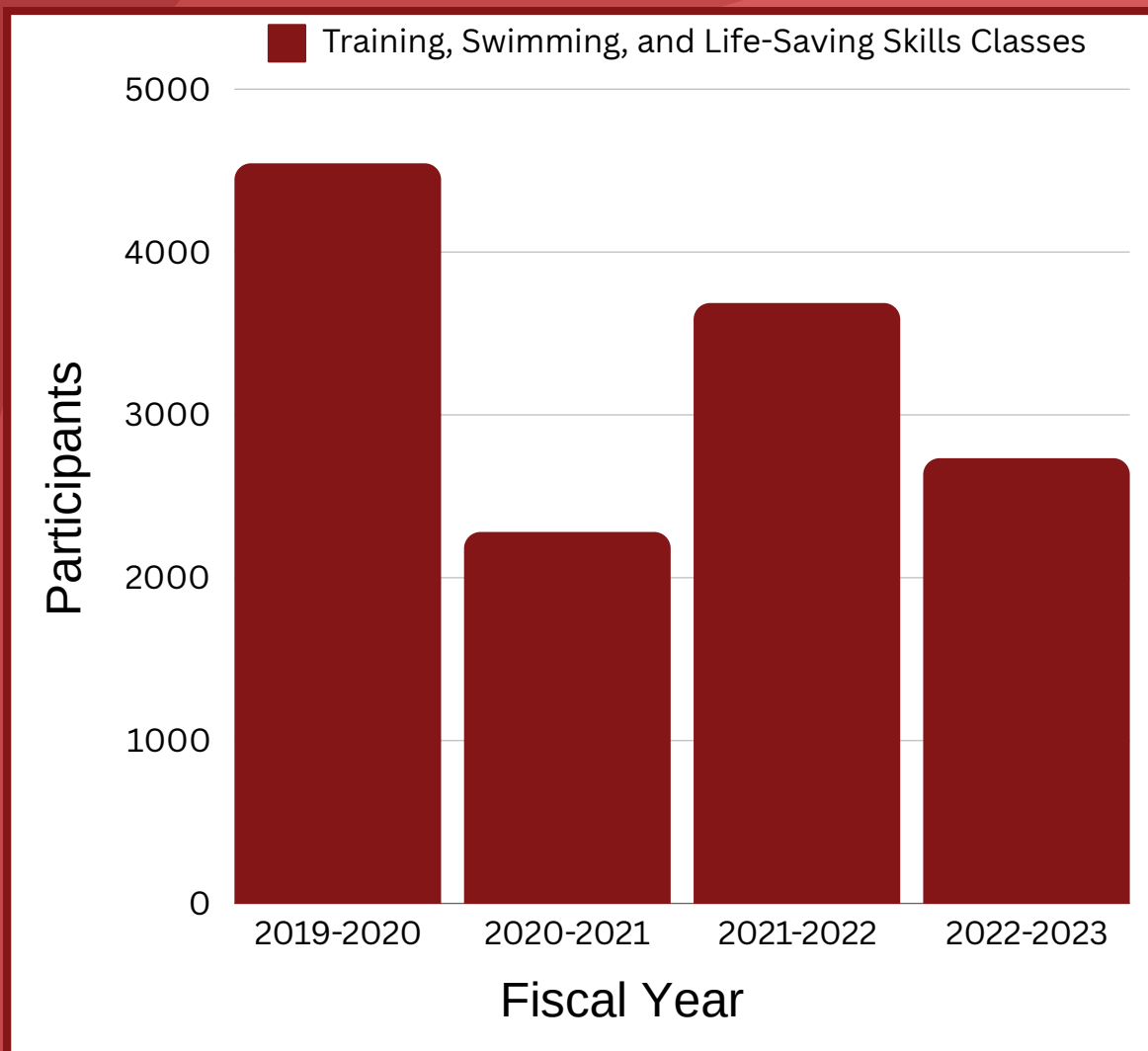
Reduction in Facility Visitors - This reduction amounts to only a few days of entries during peak hours and could have easily been lower due to weather forecasts and campus closures.





Intramural Sports Games - There were several rainouts this spring and threatening weather caused full cancellation of an event. It must be taken into account that the number of students participating in IMs was up for 2022-23 from 2021-22, 3,809 compared to 3,781, respectively. Further, overall participations were up in 2022-23 versus 2021-22 with 20,490 versus 18,368, respectively.

Classes – This was expected when F45 moved last summer from a racquetball court to the studio room. This created a more efficient environment for fitness classes because more people could participate at once rather than providing more classes in more spaces. For example, participations from 2021-22 to 2022-23 climbed from 14,687 to 20,335. While class numbers are down, participations increased dramatically. Further, due to great difficulty in hiring swimming instructors, lesson numbers were reduced. However, private lessons were offered in July 2023 to help balance the change financially. This is not reflected in the numbers below due to report timing.



CHALLENGES

Upcoming Industry Changes

Strength training is growing rapidly. Dreams include broadening the areas for strength training by removing some cardio equipment. This is beneficial in multiple ways. First, these spaces are what is desired by students and offer long-term health benefits. These spaces create a full-body workout that can include both strength and cardiorespiratory benefits. Second, the equipment lasts much longer than cardio equipment.



REFLECTIONS

Using the curriculum model and assessments for the established goals, Fit+Rec continues to excel at promoting NACE's desired skills for student employees. By assessing participation in activities like Intramural Sports and F45/FIT Classes, student participation is increasing. Use of the Sarkeys Fitness Center and Murray Case Sells Swim Complex remains comparable with 2021-22 entry numbers. This reflects that Fit+Rec is using good data to evaluate and predict student needs and desires in its services. For example, reflecting on the 2021-22 year, assessment indicated the need for field lights at the Recreational Fields. Student Government Association provided lights. In February 2023, the first games were held under lights. With the limited season for sports in the spring after the lights were installed and the numerous rainouts, anticipation builds for student participations in Intramural Sports for 2023-24, looking forward to the next year for assessment.





Since COVID, Fit+Rec has worked diligently to rebuild student staff for each area, focusing on what is important for student employees including better pay, assisting them with transferable skills so that their Fit+Rec positions are viewed as learning opportunities and employment, and listening to their desires about work uniforms, snacks, and studying while working at customer-facing desks. Through making change, student employees report a higher rate of return for the fall from the past few years. The growth of investing in student employees must continue with higher pay, in particular, to remain competitive with other student employment opportunities.

Excitement from students about the Recreational Field Lights and the new F45 studio that opened August 2022 indicates an increase in participations. These participations are anticipated to grow as students become more involved and the first, full year for both opportunities begins with the fall 2023 semester.

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

- **Hosting international students**

Worked with an Afghan refugee family consisting of two students and children to secure funding for and provide swim lessons through the Murray Case Sells Swim Complex (June 2023)

- **Programming for International Students**

- o Sunday Swim Nights
- o Zumba® with African Women's League and AfrobeatZ Dance Club
- o Zumba® with OU Cousins
- o Yoga with African Women's League
- o Planning and Logistics for Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) Olympics

- **Other**

- o Amy Davenport, Ph.D. was selected by the State Department's local grant hosts to serve as an American mentor in the Fellows Program. Through this program, the department, along with Davenport, hosted a fitness business leader from India for three weeks in May and June of 2023 to exchange ideas, policies, and processes.



THE RECREATION FIELDS

February marked an exhilarating milestone for OU Fit+Rec as students and staff were finally able to participate in one of the most electrifying aspects of all sports: playing under the lights. Previously, it became extremely difficult for students to find the balance between their regular lives, while still finding time for Intramural (IM) Sports, often leaving students to run a tight schedule, make unnecessarily tough decisions, or miss out on IM sports entirely. However, missing out on IM sports meant students lost so much more than their favorite sport. With the introduction of the Recreation Field Lights, students have been able to enjoy their life outside of classes, while not only improving their academics, but also their social life, and most importantly, their mental health.

One of the biggest advocates for the addition of the Recreation Field lights was Jonathan Dewhirst, OU Fit+Rec's Intramural Sports Coordinator. Before the lights were established, Jonathan found that IM sports were mostly competing with class schedules, for both students and staff, where the peak times were around 2 pm to 4 pm, a direct conflict with a majority of the times for games. However, he also found that "night classes are normally in the 6 pm to 9 pm window, and most of the time, students don't take multiple night classes," leaving students to be available for a majority of the nights during the week. However, the idea of the Recreation Field lights was not simply just to get more involvement. Dewhirst believes that IM Sports are important for students, giving them a place to belong on campus and a community of diverse people from different backgrounds. In addition, Dewhirst found there to be a direct correlation with easy, light involvement with IM Sports, and academics. Meaning, a student that participates is more likely to achieve greater results academically because they not only have found an outlet for their stress and anxiety, but they have found a place to belong on campus.



In addition to fostering a sense of community and enhancing academic performance, the introduction of Recreation Field lights has given significant improvement to student's mental health. By giving students the opportunity to compete in their favorite sports, often with friends, IM Sports greatly impact a student's mental health. In a study done by the National Library of Medicine, "organized sports have been associated with decreased depressive symptoms, increased self-esteem, and improved social abilities," which have allowed for lower stress levels and an improvement in self-reported mental health as a whole (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8656946/>). Teams and friendships created through IM sports also give students people to relate to, and friends who they can feel comfortable to confide in. Mental health can be demeaning and daunting, it can be almost impossible just to simply reach out. However, through IM Sports, students can feel a sense of security to reach out to their friends and talk about the issues they may face.

The future of the fields is, much like the lights, bright. Garry Armstrong, the Associate Director of OU Fit+Rec, envisions the Recreation Fields as a space where students can come together, compete, and flourish, driven by their shared love for athletics. To do this, Armstrong would love to see the eventual addition of more lights across the Recreation Fields. He stated that “having more field space for lights opens up the ability to host more student activities and would” help OU Fit+Rec host events simultaneously, or even allow for the possibility of multiple sports running on different fields, at the same time. Instead of limiting which sports can be played on which days or which fields, having more lights benefits the students by allowing more options to be expanded, with crossover between sporting events, and more games to be played at once to accommodate students schedule. With more lights, Fit+Rec would be able to expand IM Sports and create a blend between teams and clubs where both are able to play at once without concern.

In addition to adding more lights, Armstrong would love to install, two fields of artificial turf. Armstrong views artificial turf as the key to protecting students from hazards, allowing more games to be played, and allowing for a longer season of IM Sports. Of course, the cost is heavier, but, as Armstrong said, “the long-term cost of having turf, to me, is a cheaper option...it lowers the hourly time that we spend with our students and our staff prepping the field.” The labor involved in keeping the grass at its best is tedious and often uncomfortable during the winter and summer seasons. However, artificial turf can change that, allowing for less time to be put into caring for the grass, and more time for students to be able to compete. Furthermore, injury concerns on natural grass have been a major issue due to dormant grass which leads to holes, hills, and dangerous terrain for students. Artificial turf eliminates these concerns. However, Garry would like to keep at least a few fields of natural grass to accommodate the wants and needs of other sports who prefer playing on natural grass like lacrosse and soccer.



The Recreation Fields are important to the students, and the students are important to Fit+Rec. The addition of more lights as well as the implementation of artificial turf across the various fields would be utopian for OU Fit+Rec. In the 2022-2023 season, the lights were already a game changer in which Fit+Rec held a remarkable 1,739 games, with 1,247 teams, and 20,490 unique total participations. However, it isn't just statistics that hold value, it's the positive impact that the students have undergone due to the new additions that have overhauled the experience for the OU campus. Students were given a chance to be a part of something, make friends, and help themselves academically and mentally by participating. For Fit+Rec, keeping the student body engaged, active, and cheerful, is top priority.

F45 STUDIO

This past year, Sarkeys Fitness Center took the previously secluded F45 studio and revamped the program beyond recognition, creating a one-of-a-kind experience in the “largest collegiate studio in the country.”

In its early days at Sarkeys Fitness Center, F45 faced a difficult uphill battle, being tucked away in a small and secluded room in the downstairs portion of the gym, adjacent to the basketball courts. For F45, attempting to gain traction and attention while being so removed was almost impossible. Many members would not notice the small studio, and were unaware of what the F45 class entailed. Now, F45 boasts a large location showcased right next to the front doors, donning the F45 logo on the windows. With the brand-new studio, F45 members and non-members can easily become captivated in the illustrious and grand room, giving anyone and everyone a chance to experience the exhilarating program. Matt Wilson, OU Fit+Rec’s Operations Coordinator, describes the move as a way for members to “see for themselves the great fitness programming and attendance that happens daily within the room.”



Stepping inside of the all-new F45 studio, members can find most up to date equipment required by F45, as well as upgraded TV screens, and an integral sound system, where trainers and members can enjoy the best possible music. A much less noticeable, but much needed, improvement to the studio, is the additional storage that was provided with the transition to the bigger studio. Before, F45s equipment had to be stored in a completely different area than the standard studio that F45 classes took place in. Now, the additional storage has eliminated the clutter and hassle of a smaller studio by implementing closets into the room, giving easy access to trainers setting up for the day, as well as allowing for all of the equipment to be placed in one area, instead of being spread out across the facility.

Matt Wilson believes that “there is no better workout environment in Norman, from the fun and friendly staff, great music, and the most up to date workouts, you will have an exciting experience at the Sarkeys Fitness Center F45 Studio.” F45's soaring popularity among the OU community is a testament to this, as well as it's ever-growing appeal. With the program's success, increasing participations from nearly 6,000 previously, OU Fit+Rec has been able to implement the expansion of time slots, ensuring that every eager member gets to be part of this amazing experience. Instead of being a very limited program, F45 can become available to anyone at nearly any time.

As the F45 program continued to grow, OU Fit+Rec is capable of improving effortlessly to accommodate the innovative experience. OU Fit+Rec is determined to maintain the utmost quality of equipment, systems, and atmosphere to provide each member with an unforgettable workout led by top-notch trainers. With the expansion of the F45 studio and the implementation of the various new equipment and systems, OU Fit+Rec has created an exceptional experience where members can make friends, stay healthy, and be a part of something extraordinary for their fitness goals.

FIT CLASSES

OU Fitness and Recreation continues to be a hub for the OU Community to get fit, relieve stress, enjoy physical activity through sport, and build community. While some members like to work out on their own in the cardio room or weight rooms, there is another segment of the community who enjoys group fitness (FIT) and F45 classes.

The pandemic impacted attendance of FIT and F45 classes; numbers were the lowest they have been in years. Many individuals found ways to work out at home using online platforms contributing to lower attendance numbers; however, now that members feel safe being back in the facility, they are also attending classes again!

During FY 2022, the department offered 134 total classes, which included FIT and F45 classes. Interestingly, in FY 2023, the number of total classes was the same as the previous year – 134. Despite the same number of classes being offered each FY, there was an approximately 32% increase in unique participants. In that same time frame, F45 experienced a nearly 15% increase in participants. Opening a larger space for F45 impacted interest and attendance, as F45 has the highest number of attendees when compared to FIT classes, such as Yoga, Zumba®, Kickboxing, etc.



Fit+Rec has also collaborated with other campus organizations to bring awareness to fitness programs offered and to help build a sense of community. During FY 2022, the department hosted special fitness programs with 30 organizations on campus. Some of those organizations included OU Mental Health, Campus Activities Council, OU Law, Panhellenic Women, OU Cousins, Women's Health Advocacy, OU Cousins, Green Week, Residence Life, African Women's League, the AfrobeatZ Dance Club, and seven of the sororities participated in F45 as a means to earn points for health and wellness within their organization. Others participated in Zumba® and Yoga for both self-care and team building.

The African Women's League and AfrobeatZ Dance Club requested a special Zumba® class featuring Afrobeats. Since there are no instructors trained in that particular rhythm, we were able to collaborate and create a class focused on closely related rhythms such as Dance Hall and Caribbean styles. In order to incorporate Afrobeats, a member of the AfrobeatZ Dance Club led a few "freestyle" Afrobeats dances. The event was open to the OU Community and was attended by individuals not affiliated with either organization. It was a unique experience for the participants and the instructors, alike.

The fitness programs have experienced struggles in attendance since Covid. LeQui Raymond, Fit+Rec's Wellness Coordinator, strongly believes that "there is something for everyone, it's just a matter of coming in and giving it a try." In the meantime, as classes grow, OU Fit+Rec will continue to promote classes as a way to stay fit, and a great way to get to know our campus neighbors!

