

JMU Wellness Program

1. How does the management of JMU support employee health and wellness efforts?

Part of the James Madison University's (JMU) strategic plan includes fostering an environment that supports a healthy work-life balance. One way the university supports this strategic plan is by promoting wellness activities implemented through our CommonHealth program. CommonHealth at JMU is part of the work-life balance and wellness program, Balanced Dukes. Over the last few months CommonHealth at JMU and Balanced Dukes have promoted several wellness events/campaigns with high employee participation, including members of the university's senior leadership team. Since September of 2015, JMU has taken CommonHealth from being simply an email that was distributed to a small group of employees to an exciting program filled with campaigns and competitions to encourage healthy lifestyles. JMU has a dedicated budget for use in supporting efforts to improve the health and wellbeing of our workforce. In October of 2016, Secretary Rodrigues presented the university with the Worksite Certification from CommonHealth. JMU because one of less than twenty state agencies that earned this recognition.

Employees are permitted and encouraged to utilize our incredible University Recreation Center (UREC) at no cost to the employee or their spouse. We also allow dependents of employees to enjoy the facility during family hours. This facility offers group fitness classes, cardio equipment, weight lifting equipment, two indoor tracks and two indoor pools.

JMU's Talent Development Department regularly holds sessions related to a variety of health and wellness topics; employees are able to attend these sessions during their workday at no cost to them.

2. What opportunities or policies are in place to encourage JMU employees to move more?

JMU has a beautiful campus with walking paths from all areas. We also have the Bluestone Bike Trail that allows cyclists to easily navigate through campus. Several departments have purchased Varidesks that will allow office workers to easily move from a seated position to a standing position during their workday. Many departments have utilized our surplus department and acquired fitness equipment (treadmills, ellipticals, etc...) to be housed within their department to conveniently encourage employees to move more during their work hours.

3. What opportunities or policies are in place to encourage healthy eating among JMU employees?

JMU ranks in the top 10 in regards to our dining facilities. Healthy dining options are readily available all across campus; employees are able to purchase meal plans at a discounted rate for themselves and their families. Several times throughout the year, employees are able to partake in courses offered by dieticians and nutrition services in regard to healthy meal planning and preparation.

Balanced Dukes has partnered with Aramark in bringing the local Farmer's Markets to campus to provide fresh produce for faculty, staff and students.

4. What opportunities or policies are in place to assist JMU employees in managing stress?

The JMU Talent Development Department offers several classes related to stress management that employees of all levels are encouraged to sign up for. Employees do not incur any cost for these courses and they occur during work hours.

JMU offers a program called “Madison Meditates” which provides an hour of meditation practice daily around lunch time and located at different areas across campus. This program is open to all employees and students.

The University’s Recreation Center (UREC) has established a meditation room for anyone on campus to use at any time. This room offers soft lighting, a fountain, and many other features to help people relax. Cedar Stone Massage is located in UREC and they offer massages at a very reasonable rate.

CommonHealth at JMU holds a quarterly campaign focused on mindfulness as well as several monthly programs focused on stress management, substance abuse, and relaxation techniques.

5. What additional health and wellness opportunities are available to JMU employees at your worksite?

JMU offers Weight Watcher’s meetings at work. Employees are encouraged to attend these meetings and are not required to use their leave to participate. The state offers a reimbursement rate for employees participating in this program.

As stated previously, JMU has expanded our CommonHealth program exponentially since 2015. We have held several on-campus campaigns including “Take a Ride, JMU” which synchronized with on the state’s initiative, Take a Ride, Virginia. We invited local bike shops to set up on the Bluestone Trail that runs right through our campus. Employees were able to speak with cycling experts regarding safety, bike trails, and upcoming events. Representatives from the local bike shops were available to make minor repairs/adjustments to bicycles and to assist employees if they were interested in purchasing a new bike. Several employees even “test-drove” a new bike around campus. We had several cycle-related door prizes for participants.

JMU also mirrored “Move It, Virginia” with our campaign, “Move It, JMU” by encouraging employees to move more during their work day. Employees submitted photos of themselves taking the stairs rather than the elevator, doing pushups in their offices, utilizing standing desks and much more. Each picture of the employee being active gained an entry into a drawing for a grand prize. The winner of this competition won a 45-minute massage!

We also held a Biggest Loser competition for 2 years. During the competition, we sent out encouraging emails, exercise suggestions, healthy recipes and meal plans. We had high participation with these campaigns and participants collectively lost over 1500 pounds during the competitions.

This challenge evolved to a Whole Health Challenge, taking the focus from strictly weight loss and looking at health as a whole. Participants tracked their water consumption, sleep habits, exercise routines, nutrition, weight loss and inches lost throughout the challenge.

Each spring, we host “Step It Up”. This competition encourages employees to log their daily steps with a goal of reaching 10,000 steps each day. This is our most popular campaign and we have always had participation from senior leaders for Step it Up.

Our summer campaign, “School’s Out for Summer” encourages our faculty and staff to take time for themselves and their families. Employees are encouraged to submit photos of how they are enjoying their summer and finding balance. The winner receives a gift card to our local four seasons resort.

In 2018, CommonHealth at JMU launched “The 12 Months of Wellness”. Each month, we focus on a different area of wellness and offer programming from on-campus and off-campus partners. Additionally, the HR department added a new position in 2018 that would be dedicated to these initiatives. The Work Life & Engagement Specialist will continue work on the health and wellness efforts as well as develop a mentorship program, work to establish and expand flexibility options, develop affinity and employee resource groups on campus and much more.