



STANFORD UNIVERSITY: CREATING A CULTURE OF HEALTH



Purpose of Project

The Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO), in collaboration with workplace wellness experts, sought employers from a variety of industries, business types, and sizes to participate in a case-study project. These case studies focus on employers that have developed and fostered a healthy culture in the workplace, one that is intentionally designed with elements and indicators that support employee health and well-being. The case studies were developed based on HERO's **definition and elements** of a culture of health.

Overview

Stanford University is located in California's Silicon Valley and is one of the world's leading teaching and research universities. Since its opening in 1891, Stanford has been dedicated to preparing students for leadership in a complex world through its seven schools which include 2,153 faculty and 12,324 staff.

Wellness Program Background

In 1983, Stanford established a first-of-its-kind wellness program for faculty, staff, retirees, and family members called the Health Improvement Program (HIP). HIP is part of the Stanford Prevention Research Center (SPRC), a division of the Stanford School of Medicine. SPRC research focuses on the science of healthy living.

HIP funding comes from the benefits funding pool, which supports medical, vision, and dental insurance, as well as other benefits. Collectively, there are 39 wellness staff members, with about 100 additional contract employees, most of whom teach fitness, healthy living, and mind-body classes. More than 1,000

health education, fitness classes and various campus events are offered each year to faculty and staff. In 2016, the university registered 10,206 applications for healthy living classes and 12,184 fitness class registrations. The university supports these offerings with tuition assistance and scholarships.

As Stanford's workforce continued to expand and diversify, Stanford recognized the need for collaboration among the many departments and campus resources to more broadly define wellness and provide a broader range of resources to its employees. In 2006, BeWell was created by the provost as the overarching collaboration program, providing incentives and communication to promote many diverse offerings throughout the Stanford community.

In 2017, benefits-eligible employees (defined as employees working over 50% time for the university) could earn up to \$580 for completing Stanford's Health and Lifestyle Assessment (SHALA) and biometric screening along with the development of a personal

wellness plan, and behavior-modification sessions with one of the highly-trained BeWell coaches. Spouses and registered domestic partners of BeWell participants could earn up to \$240 for participating.

As part of the communication plan, BeWell hosts events throughout the year, including the Annual Wellness Fair, Cardinal Walk, Harvest Festival, and intercollegiate walking and blood donation campaigns. The two most active programs within BeWell are HIP and the Department of Athletics, Physical Education, and Recreation (DAPER). Other entities that comprise BeWell are the Help Center, which is an employee assistance program (EAP); the student health center, which offers health promotion to students and trains people interested in becoming peer health educators; and the Work-Life Balance program that provides day care for children and a variety of services that help faculty and staff manage their stress. Other collaborative departments include the Office of Parking and Transportation, Residential and Dining Enterprises, Benefits Department, and Occupational Health and Safety.



Two more programs have been created to care for Stanford's hospital caregivers: HealthySteps and WellIMD. Under the name HealthySteps, HIP provides wellness programs and services for some 16,000 non-physician employees of the two hospitals that

bear the Stanford name while representing separate employers. Currently, there are seven HIP employees serving these hospitals with the vision of improving the lives of hospital employees through a culture of care. HealthySteps seeks to provide high-touch, high-tech, evidence-based wellness programs through integrated services, which encourage employees to manage their health. Programs consist of biometric screenings, health assessments, events, self-care and team education, and tailored communication.



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The second program, WellIMD, was created in 2016 to reduce the burnout rates of the 3,000 School of Medicine physicians who care for patients of Stanford Health Care and Stanford Children's Health. This program, while still in its development stages, has been funded by the dean of the School of Medicine and both hospitals. The focus of this program is not only to reduce burnout, but also to strive for professional fulfillment for members of the care team. WellIMD's three areas of focus are personal resilience, culture of wellness and efficiency of practice.

Both HealthySteps and WellIMD face challenges that are unique to care settings that stay open around the clock. For instance, with limited time and scheduled breaks, nurses and call-center teams are not able to take an off-site 50-minute class. Instead, HealthySteps works closely with leaders to

design team trainings that meet departmental needs while integrating wellness concepts. Activities are conducted at workstations, in break rooms, in team huddles, and during staff meetings and retreats. The wellness message is brief and often experiential such as a 3-minute self-compassion exercise, a stretching break, or mindfulness meditation. Also, teams have the opportunity to apply for a HealthySteps team grant. Depending on the team size, a grant of \$200-\$1,000 is awarded every 6 months for teams to carry out a wellness initiative of their choice that serves as pilot projects for HealthySteps. The wellness network consists of about 1,300 champions who promote upcoming events, serve as role models, provide feedback, and coordinate wellness team training.

Culture of Health (CoH) Elements

Stanford's commitment to supporting the health and well-being of the Stanford community is best characterized by the following HERO Culture of Health elements:

External Community Connections and Altruism

—As shown in the founding principles established when Leland and Jane Stanford donated more than 8,000 acres of land for the development of Stanford University, a focus on the improvement of public welfare and society is an indelible part of Stanford's DNA. Stanford makes many of its health and well-being offerings available and has developed content to support community health. Some of these efforts include:

- **Healthy Living Program:** Stanford and twelve local YMCAs team up to provide free fitness programs to community members who have undergone cancer treatment. This service is provided at no cost to participants, whether they are YMCA members or not.
- **Participation in the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) Breakthrough Collaborative** on health promotion.

- Authored 2003 white paper on the impact of physical activity related to youth obesity.
- In 2009, Stanford collaborated with the YMCA, Harvard, and St. Louis Universities, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to develop the Community Healthy Living Index (CHLI), which examines environmental and social supports for healthy eating and active living among youth and families.
- Stanford Health Promotion Network (SHPN) was created by HIP as a wellness collaboration for Silicon Valley employers. Members pay Stanford a \$300 fee for an annual membership and can send multiple employees to SHPN programs. Subject matter experts and researchers such as Tom Rath, Barbara Frederickson, J.Bryan Sexton, Ron Goetzel and Dean Ornish have presented at SHPN events.

Stanford colleagues are encouraged to serve as volunteers for the community, state, national, and international health initiatives, and to advocate for health-related issues they consider important. One example of this is the 100 Million Healthier Lives campaign sponsored by IHI. Participating in this goal to have 100 million healthier lives by 2020 shows commitment to one's self and serves as an inspiration to others who don't know how or where to begin. Stanford will be implementing an online registration toll to track involvement in this initiative.

Executive Leadership — Stanford Provost John Etchemendy has been the highest-profile supporter of BeWell and is one of the most respected leaders on campus. It was under his leadership that BeWell was created in 2007, and he has continued to show his support through funding and the ongoing promotion and participation in HIP programs. In fact, the annual Cardinal Walk was renamed in his honor as Stanford's longest-serving provost. The annual event has been offered for more than 11 years and offers faculty, staff, and students the opportunity to take a break

in their day to celebrate the culture of wellness at Stanford by coming together with the provost for a one-mile journey around Stanford's scenic campus. In 2016, 1,900 Stanford employees participated in this celebration of wellness.



In June 2017, Stanford Medicine announced the appointment of Dr. Tait Shanafelt of Mayo clinic as an Associate Dean and Chief Wellness Officer. His appointment, by the Dean of the Medical School, makes Stanford the first academic medical center in the country to create a position of chief wellness officer.

Metrics and Measurement — Health promotion is a science-based profession that requires skills and knowledge as well as human qualities. Stanford incorporates social psychology as viewed by Albert Bandura, Carl Rogers, James Prochaska and other psychologists who believe education must be focused on the learner rather than on the teacher. Research, data, and best practices inform decision making about wellness offerings and ongoing evaluation activities.

Policies and Procedures — Stanford has numerous examples of policies that promote health and well-being including leave policies; flexible work arrangements; Well Time; sabbaticals; volunteerism policies; and respectful workplace policies. Specifically, Stanford offers eight hours of Well Time to participate in biometric screenings, meet with a wellness coach or attend campus events.

Recruitment and Selection — Wellness leaders recognize that a successful program depends largely upon its staff. In recruiting individuals, Stanford looks for essential human qualities that build trust. Although wellness staff members may share some of the same lifestyle health issues as wellness participants, wellness professionals are expected to value health, have a positive and optimistic outlook, and to care for themselves as they would care for a friend or colleague. Stanford encourages lifelong education as a way of keeping up to date and to achieve upward career mobility. As people gain experience and maturity, they begin to think about strategic initiatives, leadership, mentoring, and legacy of the program within the institution. Staff retention also establishes an institutional memory that maintains traditions and values symbols.



Sense of Community — Stanford creates opportunities to bring people together and bond them through shared experiences such as through an all-campus event, an educational program that brings small groups together, a Wellness Ambassador who links the wellness program to others, or a one-to-one learning opportunity. The aim is to create a psychological environment that is perceived by employees as safe, collaborative, accepting, and genuine. Stanford community activities foster the development of meaningful friendships at work, which create a “web of connection” that strengthens trust and good will.



Shared Mission and Values — The first policy in the administrative guide (1.1.1) at Stanford University states “we are a respectful workplace”. This has broad implications at the intersection between the university and its employees, and between the BeWell program and its colleagues throughout the organization. Faculty and staff see BeWell as an important university benefit, and they believe BeWell improves their work experience at Stanford. HIP and BeWell staff members are proud to work at Stanford. They understand that their words and actions reflect not only upon themselves but also upon the university. They also understand that they represent a profession they respect. Moreover, Stanford’s culture of quality is embraced by wellness staff. Programs are scientifically accurate and demonstrate quality and professionalism among a workforce of brilliant people. Participants are quick to assert that the program brand is strong, staff are capable, and staff values reflect their care for the mission of wellness. Wellness programs are valued and respected throughout the university.

Supportive Built Environment — Stanford creates an environment that supports health and well-being in many ways, including:

- Dedicated bicycle lanes surrounding and cutting across campus with sufficient bicycle racks
- A variety of healthy choices at food vendors across campus
- An outdoor labyrinth to quiet the mind during walking meditation

- Museums, sculpture, and outdoor art installations scattered across campus
- Miles of hiking and walking trails in open-space Stanford-owned preserve
- Athletic fields for Frisbee, sand volleyball, and other recreational sports near campus dormitories
- Free Stanford shuttle bus that connects to local bus and train routes
- Parking on the campus periphery to promote walking to office and campus buildings
- Two large fitness centers, located on opposite ends of the campus to improve access
- Two aquatic areas on separate sides of the campus
- A chapel in the center of campus, where people can walk at any time of day for quiet reflection
- Windhover Contemplation Center provides an environment for quiet reflection throughout the day, to relieve stress and invigorate the spirit



Numerous opportunities are offered related to health and well-being within the Stanford community, including:

- Healthy Living Classes, which are reimbursed through Stanford Tuition Assistance Program (STAP) funds. To encourage the use of these resources, every employee receives an \$800 allowance for approved courses.
- Every employee gets eight hours of Well Time to attend wellness programs, biometric testing, coaching, and other wellness activities.
- Classes are offered by HIP in collaboration with

Parking and Transportation Services to promote alternative commuting practices and reduce automobile use on campus.

- HIP classes are offered related to carbon reduction, conservation, recycling, and greening one's lifestyle.
- Wellness coaching and health behavior counseling for weight management, smoking cessation, and other forms of behavior modification. Coaches use cognitive-behavioral techniques and motivational interviewing.
- HIP programs are offered for Stanford alumni when they return to campus for homecoming events.

Results

Approximately 75% of Stanford faculty and staff participate in university-sponsored programs designed to improve their lives and sense of well-being.

One advisory committee member reflected, "Stanford employees practice wellness because of the culture and the environment created by HIP and BeWell." Each year Stanford surveys employees. The 2016 survey revealed that: .

- 90% said BeWell was "one of the top perks of working at Stanford."
- 95% said Stanford is "somewhat committed" or "very committed" to improving the health of all employees.

Spending so much time in a place that promotes science-driven programs and critical thinking can make it challenging to prove wellness has a causal relationship with lower absenteeism or healthcare costs. Reflecting upon this challenge at a recent Advisory Committee meeting where employee survey results were shared, the chair of the Health Policy and Research group noted, "BeWell is one of the most recognized program on campus, and it is appreciated by faculty and staff. Stanford's healthcare costs are lower than comparable organizations with similar programs in the Bay area." The Psychiatry Department

chair agreed, noting the importance of employee retention. She said, "Stanford attracts the best employees in Silicon Valley, in part through benefits like HIP and BeWell. These programs are two of the most important factors that help retain faculty and staff. When combined with improved morale and productivity, you can't beat what BeWell brings."

Lessons Learned

Stanford uses survey data to identify barriers to participation in programs and ways to improve programs, so staff can help employees take further steps in their wellness journey. One way Stanford has tried to remove barriers to access and time is by offering Wellness on Wheels (WOW) classes that bring instructors to departments by request. These WOW classes are often offered when they can best support departmental needs, and they may be shortened to decrease schedule conflicts. Perceived cultural barriers have been confronted by discussing them with managers in the Manager's Academy curriculum, which teaches managers how to promote wellness within their work group. Employees are creative and offer suggestions through their survey comments. For example, the university Well Time policy originated from a survey comment. From the narrative survey responses, Stanford also learned that participants were concerned about data security and access. Further analysis revealed that security of personal information kept some people from participating in programs. With this information, Stanford used its website, campus online newspaper, and wellness advocates to start conversations about data security. Understanding data security issues enabled staff to make program changes that minimize this concern.



Conclusion

Stanford's wellness programs reflect the organization's founding principles: to help people succeed and do something useful to contribute to the greater good of the community. Many of the HIP programs and resources were developed first using theory and scientific evidence to support intervention research studies. After rigorous testing, programs have been adapted as necessary for distribution through HIP, which serves as a cornerstone in the portfolio of offerings available through BeWell and HealthySteps. Also, Stanford shares its resources with the global community, often serving as trainers and consultants to other universities, health systems, and employers around the world. During its more than 34-year history, Stanford wellness programs have relied heavily on collaboration and partnership to grow its offerings. Along the way, staff has learned the importance of building trust as a key to future success. Foundational efforts to build relationships and support the vision of passionate people has made a difference. Even with a tiny budget, passionate people will rise to do good and support others. This support and kindness is returned and has bred a tremendous amount of goodwill toward HIP, BeWell, and HealthySteps programs. The philosophy that Stanford brings to these initiatives is best embodied in a quote by Maya Angelou: "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Contributors to this Case Study

This case study is a product of the HERO Culture of Health (CoH) Study Committee and its Values of Culture Work Group. The CoH Study Committee was created to establish a widely accepted definition of a healthy culture to build consensus and understanding of its value when supporting the health and well-being of a population. Case study interviews and development of this report was led by HERO staff and members of the CoH Study Committee. HERO would like to extend a special thank you to the Centers for Disease Control for additional support during the editing process.

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The Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO) is a national non-profit dedicated to identifying and sharing best practices in the field of workplace health and wellbeing that improves the health and well-being of workers, their spouses, dependents and retirees. HERO was established over 20 years ago and is a member driven organization where learning opportunities and research are led by committees. HERO's work focuses on sharing best practices, advocating for improvements in the field, and providing practical solutions for employers who share HERO's commitment to health and well-being for employees, families and communities.