

Starting an Exercise Science Club

Starting an Exercise Science Club is a great way to get involved within your department, learn more about the area of Exercise Science, and gain leadership experience. There are a number of things you need to think about early on in the planning stages. The more work you put in at the beginning, the more you will get out of the experience at the end.

Activities/Focus/Mission

Once you've identified that there is an interest in starting an Exercise Science Club, the next step is identifying the focus of the Club. The focus could be purely social, a way to join with your classmates in activities outside of the classroom. Though many Exercise Science Clubs create an environment that merges academics, philanthropy, fun, volunteering, and career exploration. At the start, you might want to pick one or two areas to start with. For example, you might want to start with one academic meeting and one social meeting a month. Journal club is a great way to explore various areas of Exercise Physiology, get experience reading and understanding research articles, and identifying who the leaders are in the field. Many Clubs will identify a monthly or semester theme – exercise at altitude, exercise and pregnancy, measurement of physical activity – and focus their journal club selections around that theme. This allows for a deeper exploration of a topic that might only get a short mention in a classroom setting. In addition to journal club, the Exercise Science Club may pick a local charity or cause – autism, Special Olympics, the local food pantry – and put together an event, such as a short fun run, to raise money for that charity. This is not only beneficial for the charity, but is a good way to gain exposure for the Exercise Science Club, and give the members another type of experience in organization and leadership. The type of activities that can be organized is really only limited by your members' imagination.

The Role of a Faculty Advisor

Engaging a member of your department faculty in the planning stages may be helpful in deciding on the focus of the Exercise Science Club. Additionally, many colleges and universities require a faculty sponsor for all academic/activity clubs, so having someone on board early in the process may help when dealing with administration. Finding a faculty member who is actively involved with ACSM will be helpful, as they will have a better understanding of the local and national opportunities where the Exercise Science Club can get involved. Additionally, a faculty member who is involved with ACSM may have contacts within the organization that might help if the Club wants to invite a guest speaker or two to come talk to the group.

Meetings

Finding a day of the week that doesn't conflict with classes can be difficult, but setting a regular meeting schedule – and sticking with it! – takes the guess work out of things for both active and potential members. The meetings can be as frequent as once a week, but to start things off, every other week or once a month might be easier until things get up and running. Identifying the goal of each meeting, and setting an agenda will also help accomplish the Club's overall goals and set a professional tone for the running of the Club.

Setting Up the Leaders

Organizing the leadership structure of the Exercise Science Club needs to be done early in the planning process. Having an election to identify the leaders – President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary – within the first few meetings will help get things up and running in a quick, and organized, way. With elected positions, members will know what role they play and who has what responsibility. This will help keep things moving along with less confusion.

Membership

When your Exercise Science Club is ready to start accepting members, you need to figure out how best to reach your potential members. Some departments have regular email notices that go out to all students who have declared their major within the department. If your department doesn't have this built-in means of communication, word of mouth can be just as, if not more, efficient. Ask your professors if you can make announcements in their classes, put up flyers in the department, get out and talk to as many of your classmates as possible – every little bit helps.

Dues

Some clubs charge a small, nominal fee each semester – \$10 to \$15 seems to be a common amount. This money can be used to provide snacks for the meetings or to reduce the cost for an end of the year gathering. Having dues also can be a way to make sure your members are serious about being a part of the Exercise Science Club. When people have to pay a small fee to join an organization, they tend to take their role in the organization more seriously. You want your members to be involved and invested in the Exercise Science Club.