

College/University Instructional Physical Activity Program Support: History, Advocacy and Wellbeing Promotion Enhancement Through Inaugural National Summit

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ABSTRACT

College/University Instructional Physical Activity Programs (IPAP) have a long history in higher education and can effectively promote wellbeing among a large number of students. Despite IPAP benefits, prevalence has declined over the last few decades. Quality assurance, support, advocacy, innovation, and assessment are needed to strengthen IPAP. However, organizational support and resources for IPAP are lacking; thus, an inaugural National IPAP Summit was hosted in the Fall of 2023 to bring together IPAP professionals. Education, networking, support, resources, and innovative ideas were offered at the summit. Participants had unanimous positive feedback and support of future endeavors for IPAP professionals. Professional organization endorsement is needed to continue to offer opportunities, education, and support for IPAP professionals to maximize the wellbeing promotion potential and sustainability of IPAP.

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BACKGROUND

College/University Instructional Physical Activity Programs (IPAP) made their debut in 1861 at Amherst College in Massachusetts because of Edward Hitchcock's vision to promote health among students for the sake of reaching peak intellectual productivity (Cardinal et al., 2012; Cardinal & Casebolt, 2022). As these types of courses evolved, IPAP began offering a wide variety of formats and curricula. Though IPAP are still part of college/university curricula around the country, their prevalence and enrollment has declined over the last several decades. In the 1920s, 97% of four-year colleges/universities offered physical activity (PA) courses. In the 1960s and 1970s, over 90% of colleges and universities offered PA courses and around 80% were required for graduation (Cardinal et al., 2012; Hensley, 2000). Around 2000, PA courses were widely replaced with health-related fitness, multidimensional courses, a type of conceptual-based physical education course (CPE) that addressed engaging in PA for improvements in fitness for health and a variety of other topics such as nutrition, stress management, and overweight/obesity (Strand et al., 2010). In 2010, around 86% of colleges and universities offered IPAP courses, and about 42% were required for graduation.



Yet, the latest data in the literature shows that only 39.55% of four-year institutions require PA credits for undergraduate graduation (Cardinal et al., 2012).

IPAP courses in higher education are identified as beneficial and important, though few are required or even offered (Lothes, 2020; Marinaro et al., 2022). Downward trends are related to growth of campus recreation programs, administrative and organizational issues, funding shortages, lack of documented program effectiveness, and failure to demonstrate how the requirement meets institutional strategic planning (Cardinal & Casebolt, 2022; Kim et al., 2015). Over the years, organizations and researchers have provided recommendations and minimum guidelines for IPAP (Russell & Sampson Moore, 2022). SHAPE America (2021) updated their Appropriate Instructional Practice Guidelines for Higher Education Physical Activity Programs and included minimum recommendations for administration and support, program staffing, professionalism, curriculum, learning environments, instructor strategies, and assessment. However, among IPAP professionals, knowledge and use of these publications is anecdotally sparse.

AIMS

Despite the opportunities, challenges, and threats IPAP experience, professional organization support, advocacy, and resources for IPAP are limited. To date, there is no national organization that is the home of IPAP where faculty can gather to share research, discuss best-practices. and determine effective advocacy of IPAP. During the Fall of 2023, an inaugural National Instructional Physical Activity Program Summit was offered. The aim of this publication is to provide an overview of the inaugural National Instructional Physical Activity Program Summit, present outcomes, and call for future strategic gatherings of IPAP professionals for wellbeing promotion in higher education, specifically academic affairs divisions.

IMPLEMENTATION

In the spring of 2023, the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW), committed to hosting an IPAP summit at no cost to attendees. Leaders in the IPAP field were identified and contacted to gauge interest. There was unanimous support and interest in a national summit during the fall of 2023. Five IPAP leaders from four different universities agreed to be part of the planning team. The theme for the summit was established as an interactive summit for those engaged in IPAP. Featured speakers, workshops, panels, and roundtables were planned to encourage active engagement and dialog among colleagues. A variety of wellness activities were planned throughout the summit to promote the centrality of whole person wellbeing in physical activity.

Virtual meetings with the planning committee began in the spring of 2023. Summit hosts coordinated with local hotels, determined recreational activities for attendees, and secured reservations for facilities and catering services at UNCW during the summit. Initially an email was sent to an IPAP listserv of 480 college/university professionals with a graphic to promote the date and title of the summit. Late June, the official summit website was advertised and included a draft of the agenda, transportation and hotel information, details on a pre-conference event, and a registration link. Individual email invitations were sent by the hosts to secure presenters for various topics identified by the planning committee and outlined on the agenda. UNCW students, faculty, and staff were recruited to present wellness activities throughout the summit. Three months from the summit date, the agenda was refined and updated on the summit website. Final registration numbers included 47 IPAP professionals representing 26 college/university

campuses. Approximately 20 individuals emailed that they were interested but unable to attend. Registration for all participants was free and included parking, light breakfast, and hot buffet lunch each of the two summit days.

Using the Appropriate Instructional Practice Guidelines for Higher Education Physical Activity Programs (SHAPE America, 2021) as a resource for planning the agenda, sessions and presenters were established with 14 presenters from 12 different universities. Sessions were spread across two days in early October. Breakout sessions were not offered to maximize networking, collaboration, and a unified summit. Sessions were offered in the following areas: history and future of IPAP (keynote); workshops for applying guidelines, research and assessment, innovation and collaboration, hybrid/online delivery models in IPAP; panels on wellness curriculum, advocacy, student perspectives; and roundtables for discussions around resourcing and the future of IPAP. The final summit agenda, with presenter names omitted, is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

IPAP Summit Agenda

Day 1	
8:30 AM	Check-in and Registration and Morning Snacks
9:00 AM	Keynote Presentation: A Story about a Program Named IPAP
10:00 AM	IPAP Networking
10:45 AM	Break
11:00 AM	Appropriate Instructional Practice Guidelines for Higher Education Physical Activity Programs Presentation
11:45 AM	Applying the Guidelines Workshop
12:15 PM	Lunch (provided)
1:15 PM	Panel Presentation: Wellness in IPAP
2:15 PM	Wellness activity/Break
2:30 PM	Roundtables (45 minutes): Resourcing IPAP when there is limited funding
3:15 PM	Break
3:30 PM	Presentation Panel: Innovative and effective ways to get students excited about IPAP
4:30 PM	Wellness activity/Depart for the day
Day 2	
8:30 AM	Check-in/Morning Snacks
9:00 AM	Presentation Panel: Advocating for IPAP—making a case for the relevance and value
9:45 AM	Workshop: Research and assessment in IPAP—advocating for your program with data
10:15 AM	Wellness Activity/Break
10:30 AM	Lightning Round Presentation (45 Minutes) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rethinking IPAP Course Format for Increased Enrollment 2. Building connections and collaboration on campus
11:15 AM	Break
11:30 AM	Student Panel: Student perspectives of IPAP
12:00 PM	Lunch

	Table conversation: Teaching, engaging and inspiring the post-pandemic student
1:00 PM	Lightning Round Presentations <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Successfully delivering IPAP Online 2. From Mandatory to Memorable
1:45 PM	Wellness Activity/Break
2:00 PM	The Future of IPAP Roundtables
3:00 PM	Adjourn

OUTCOMES

Feedback from participants was unanimously positive and enthusiastic. The final session of the summit included small roundtable discussions on the future needs of IPAP. Representatives from each group shared appreciation for this summit and the interest in continued collaboration and communication. This was also recorded in the future directions brainstorming document created by participants. Bringing together both current and future leaders in IPAP provided an opportunity for community building and mentorship specific to the needs of IPAP. Participants discussed the goal to continue collaboration with similar in person and online opportunities to share new ideas, problem solve, and advocate for IPAP, while garnering national organization buy-in. A centralized Google Drive was created as an ongoing resource and includes uploaded documents from the summit and additional files to support IPAP leaders and newcomers. Since the summit, attendees have communicated via email with a common meeting time at SHAPE America National Conference in spring 2024. Collaboration for the special edition of the BHAC Journal for IPAP was an additional outcome of the summit. Collaboration and plans to present and meet at the National Association of Kinesiology in Higher Education in January 2025 were submitted summer 2024.

Among the summit attendees, everyone received a copy of the Appropriate Instructional Practice Guidelines for Higher Education to offer support and guidance at individual institutions. While each IPAP offers unique opportunities to deliver instructional physical activity, commonalities and minimum recommendations as included in the guidelines strengthen IPAP leaders to continue to advocate for IPAP presence, sustainability, and growth in higher education. Furthermore, continued enhancement to IPAP curriculum such as the wellness promoting benefits of physical activity will assist in meeting students' emotional, social and psychological needs (Short et al., 2022).

Future planning includes updating the Appropriate Instructional Practice Guidelines for Higher Education Physical Activity Programs and promoting their application in IPAP. IPAP representatives who participated in the IPAP Summit are involved in a variety of national organizations. Identifying support of IPAP, including in person and asynchronous resources within national organizations is ongoing. To date, as a product of the IPAP Summit, one organization is proposing IPAP support and an organizational home to its executive board. If approved, this national organization will support an annual IPAP Summit and virtual resources. It is vital to the growth of healthy campus communities that IPAP be supported and resourced through not only campus support but professional alliance as well. It is imperative that IPAP professionals have opportunities to learn from, grow with, and connect to their IPAP colleagues for quality programs and campus wellbeing promotion. Given the history of IPAP, the needs of IPAP and the experience with this summit, it is recommended that IPAP professionals seek out networking and professional

development opportunities and advocate for future IPAP specific summits. In addition to these recommendations, it is recommended that IPAP professionals advocate for IPAP specific breakout meetings or IPAP strands at national conferences they attend to bring in new professionals, interest, and support for continued improvement in IPAP.

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