



RECREATION & WELLBEING

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



At Recreation & Wellbeing, we move Badgers to play hard, get fit, and live well. Our facilities, programs, and services are designed to remove barriers, build community, and support student wellbeing. From group fitness classes to intramural sports, personal training, massage therapy, and more, we offer a variety of opportunities for students to find their fit on campus.

We're more than a building. We're building a movement.

Participation benefits:

- > Increased overall wellbeing & happiness
- > Mental health and stress relief
- > Student development
- > Student recruitment and retention
- > Overall satisfaction and success

70%

of students are Rec Well participants

700+

students employed each year

Peer wellness coaching at UW-Madison

On college campuses nationwide, students are lacking sufficient resources for their mental health.

Demand is greater than supply, and students aren't able to get the support they need. Made possible by generous donor support, we are in the process of launching a peer wellness coaching program on campus to support students and their pressing needs. In the spring of 2021, we hired our first cohort of 10 peer wellness coaches. After a semester of rigorous training and education, coaches will be able to act as an additional resource to support student mental health needs on campus.

At UW-Madison we use the International Coaching Federation (ICF, 2019) definition to provide the framework for our program: "Peer coaching partners with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential. Coaches honor the client as the expert in their life and believe every client is creative, resourceful and whole." Peer coaching is a health, wellness, and safety-promoting program that provides space for students to build coping skills, gain knowledge about campus resources, and practice goal setting to proactively enhance their own wellbeing.

This program is being developed in collaboration with Samaritan Family Wellness Foundation and Center for Healthy Minds, with training support from University Health Services.



The state of mental health on campus

According to the 2019 National College Health Assessment on college students' health behaviors and perceptions:

- 70.8%** of respondents reported feeling very sad in the previous 12 months
- 65.7%** of respondents reported feeling overwhelming anxiety in the previous 12 months
- 45.1%** of respondents reported feeling so sad it was difficult to function
- 13.3%** of respondents reported seriously considering suicide

In the 2019 iteration of the Health Minds Study, UW-Madison student flourishing significantly decreased compared to the 2016 study. Results revealed that students of marginalized identities (gender diverse, LGBTQ+, students of color, international students, students with more financial stress, and first-generation students) were significantly less likely to flourish.

After a global pandemic that upended our lives, support is needed now more than ever. While students currently have access to resources through University Health Services, there is a need for additional resources and support; this need can be mitigated through peer-to-peer programming, which is easily scalable.

Why peer coaching?

- › There is strong evidence for peer influence on student health behaviors. Students tend to feel more comfortable talking to other students, who better understand what they're going through compared to a professional staff member.
- › Peer coaches are trained in referral resources and risk management; this training teaches them to confidently make referrals to clinical mental health services or other campus partners, when appropriate.
- › We are also giving peer coaches transferrable skills and developing them to succeed now and in the future.
- › Peer coaching is more scalable and financially feasible than hiring full-time mental health providers.



The five year plan: What's next for peer coaching

After hiring our first cohort of coaches in spring 2021, we are currently training them on how to effectively support students. Next fall, we'll begin our first official semester of peer coaching on campus, offering group Wellness Circles as our initial program. Next spring, we'll launch 1:1 coaching sessions and more mindfulness programs. Each year, we'll increase the number of coaches on campus, eventually reaching 50 coaches by 2026.

By then, we'll be operating our program out of the new Natatorium, which is currently under construction and expected to open in 2023. The new facility, which is part of the \$236M Rec Well Master Plan, will include 4,300 square feet of dedicated space for wellbeing programs. While our peer coaching program will be anchored at this facility, we'll offer coaching sessions across campus for students to choose the location that makes the most sense for them.

Future funding needs

As we look to add more programming, we need to add coaches. Over the next five years, our biggest financial needs will be related to staffing, including:

- > Professional staff members (\$700,000)
- > Student employees (\$500,000)
- > Graduate/project assistants (\$200,000)

We know students will benefit from peer support, which is why we are excited to bring this program to campus and build it over the next several years. Through 1:1 and group coaching, we have the opportunity to make mental health resources more accessible, foster a campus-wide culture of support and inclusion, normalize conversation about student wellbeing, and greatly impact the general student body.



“ There are some days where I am still in awe that I am able to be a Peer Wellness Coach. The amount of growth I have experienced is surreal, and...has given me a newfound confidence. While I still have much more to learn, I look forward to inspiring and educating my fellow Badgers, because my journey has only begun. ”

– Peer Wellness Coach