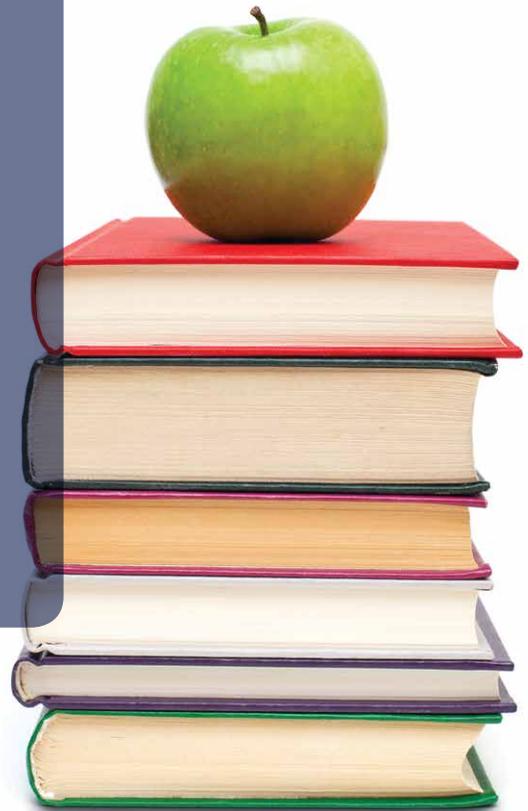




# Case study: University boosts well-being through Well-doing<sup>SM</sup>.



*Well-doing at University of Louisville improves health, shares the wealth*

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## Organization Profile

Founded in 1798, the University of Louisville (known locally as UofL) is a public research university with three locations:

- The 287-acre Belknap Campus: Three miles from downtown Louisville, it houses seven of the university's 12 colleges and schools.
- The Health Sciences Center: A downtown Louisville medical complex housing health-related programs and the University of Louisville Hospital.
- The 243-acre Shelby Campus: Located in eastern Jefferson County.

Nearly 6,900 faculty/staff work multiple shift schedules and support student enrollment of more than 21,000. The benefits eligible population is 54 percent female and 46 percent male.

UofL has actively worked to create a culture of health. Its "Get Healthy Now" program, begun in 2005, enjoys a 74 percent participation rate, and it shows a strong record of engagement and retention in its health enhancement programs and activities.

# Well-being comes from Well-doing

## The Challenge

Like many large organizations near the turn of the 21st century, UofL experienced double-digit increases in employee health insurance rates year after year. In 2002, it adopted a self-insured health plan to exercise greater control over costs. Unfortunately, costs continued to spiral upwards.

“After a couple of years, we realized that our own poor health was the cause of our high costs. We came to the realization that ‘we have met the enemy, and it is us,’” said Patricia Benson, director of health and disease management for UofL and leader of the Get Healthy Now program. In a speech to UofL faculty and staff, the University president reviewed the sobering statistics, and gave the team an imperative to change their collective disease trajectory—to “Get healthy now!”

## The Solution

Get Healthy Now launched in 2005 as a voluntary, incentive-based program designed to nurture a culture of health, engage employees, contain health care costs and decelerate the rate of increase in UofL’s overall cost of coverage. The philosophy behind the program was a focus on aggressive health management and improvement, and to reduce costs by improving the health of employees, staff and their covered spouses.

In 2007, UofL selected HealthFitness as a partner for health risk assessment, health coaching, eHealth web portal support and incentives management. In 2013, UofL expanded the partnership when it opened a 22,000-square-foot wellness center, a hub for health and fitness assessment, workout design and wellness coaching services, as well as a range of health improvement classes and community well-being offerings.

Realizing that health is more than simply the absence of disease, UofL adopted a view of

*“We came to the realization that we have met the enemy, and it is us.”*

health with a whole-person orientation. “There are so many instances where supporting the well-being of employees supports the well-being of the organization,” Benson said.

“The message we wanted our campus community to embrace is that health is a life well-lived, and it’s in you. We are helping our employees



define what that means for themselves, and then we provide the resources and tools to help them achieve those wellness goals.” Well-being comes from Well-doing, and UofL is a case example for Well-doing.

That means listening to employees and designing programs to help them meet social, emotional and financial goals, and providing a Well-doing environment. UofL has responded in concrete ways:

- Coaching open to all interested program participants, regardless of whether they are at low, medium or high risk
- Caregiving workshops (including legal, financial and social factors)

- Bike share, team biking initiatives and a bicycle commuting group
- Walk-to-Run Club
- Indoor walking track
- Smoke-free campus and free smoking cessation classes
- Multi-year competition between UofL and the University of Kentucky employees to register the most steps every year
- Mindfulness, yoga and relaxation are among the many classes offered through the wellness center
- Community partnership with the American Heart Association for support groups, and disease management partnerships with the Greater Louisville YMCA and the University of Louisville Hospital



## Results

A 2012–2013 ROI analysis conducted by HealthFitness and validated by benefit consultants found the UofL health management program returned a benefit cost ratio of 7.16 to 1 after four years. Program participants saw an average claims savings of \$1,300. The result: An estimated \$4.3 million in reduced claims spending.

In November 2013, UofL announced it would use the cost savings to fund a “living wage” goal, increasing the minimum salary for employees to \$10 an hour. In July 2014, it increased to \$11 per hour.

“The most effective strategy for containing long-term health care cost is to help employees live healthier lives by investing in the resources they need to do so. We all shoulder the burden of disease and share in the wealth of good health,” Benson said.

# Well-being comes from Well-doing

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## Key Considerations

Well-doing is HealthFitness' whole-person approach to health management. UofL's success frames important Well-doing lessons for other employers.

- 1. Leadership matters:** The University president's words, "We must get healthy now," inspired action. The program receives ongoing support from the University president and from the college provost, who are both visible participants as well.
- 2. Communication must be multi-channel:** The program communicates activities via posters, email, web portal and social media.
- 3. Boost access:** With a large employee population across three campuses, access could be a challenge. UofL provides multiple, convenient ways to participate, including a shuttle route with a transportation stop within a block of the centrally-located wellness center. There is no monthly wellness center membership fee for employees and it costs only \$10 a month for spouses or qualifying adult.
- 4. Make the incentive matter:** In its first year, a \$20/month reduction in the health plan premium for program participation yielded only 50 percent employee participation. When UofL increased the premium reduction to \$40/month, participation rocketed to 70 percent.
- 5. Social responsibility strengthens the culture:**
  - To sustain the minimum wage increase for UofL workers, everyone must continue to pursue good health; it's a social contract now.
  - The Get Healthy Now bike-to-work initiative, bike check-out program and bike safety classes contribute to UofL's cultural goal to lower energy use and support sustainability initiatives.
  - Get Healthy Now promotes community-sponsored agriculture on campus, to encourage consumption of plant-based, locally grown foods.



### Tanja Madsen

*Director of Product Management*

Tanja is director of product management for HealthFitness. Her career spans more than 25 years in health education, product development and innovative health management solutions.

Want to learn more about Well-doing?

Download the *Think* piece, "Advancing employee health from well-being to Well-doing: Activating an aging workforce to do well."