

Master of Public Health
Integrative Learning Experience Report

***DEVELOPMENT OF WELLNESS PROGRAM AND
SUPPORTING MATERIALS FOR RISE UP SCHOLARS***

by

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submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Summary/Abstract

Sedentary behavior has become a significant public health concern in America, contributing to the rise of obesity and a host of negative health outcomes, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and mental health issues. As more adults adopt sedentary lifestyles due to the nature of their work, these behaviors not only affect their health but also place a growing burden on the healthcare system. Addressing these behaviors early, before they solidify into adulthood, is critical to preventing long-term health complications. One potential intervention point is during the college years, where students are transitioning into adulthood and are particularly open to learning new habits that can shape their future behaviors. College students are often vulnerable to adopting sedentary lifestyles due to academic pressures, lack of resources, and limited health education.

The college setting provides a unique opportunity to introduce positive health behaviors that can counteract the sedentary tendencies many students may face as they transition into the workforce. This is particularly important for business students, who are likely to enter office jobs that often involve long hours of sitting and little physical activity. By instilling healthier habits during their college years, students can be better prepared to manage their well-being in their future careers.

My Applied Practical Experience with the Rise Up Wellness program at Kansas State University aimed to address this issue by targeting a cohort of College of Business students, a population that is especially susceptible to sedentary behaviors. Through the program, I designed and implemented a series of wellness activities and educational sessions that emphasized the importance of physical and mental wellness, with the goal of preparing students for healthier, more productive lives both during and after their academic careers. The program sought to reframe health behaviors as professional skills that can enhance quality of life and performance in the workplace.

The goals, activities, and products developed during my APE were guided by my educational background in kinesiology and public health. My educational coursework,

literary review, and semester projects such as the ones completed in KIN 610 and KIN 805, provided the foundation for understanding the complex relationship between sedentary behavior, health outcomes, and the workplace, while my practical experiences allowed me to apply this knowledge in a real-world setting. The creation of program materials, such as the syllabus, evaluation tools, and partnership strategies, allowed me to refine my skills in program planning, evaluation, and communication. These experiences not only contributed to the creation of the Rise Up Wellness program but also enhanced my development as a student and public health professional, preparing me for future roles in promoting wellness in diverse settings.

Subject Keywords: Social Cognitive Theory, Self Determination Theory, exercise, self-efficacy, program design and evaluation.

Table of Contents

Summary/Abstract	3
List of Figures	5
List of Tables	5
Chapter 1 - Literature Review	6
Figures.....	6
Chapter 2 - Learning Objectives and Project Description	21
Chapter 3 - Results	25
Chapter 4 - Discussion.....	29
Chapter 5 - Competencies	33
Student Attainment of MPH Foundational Competencies	33
Student Attainment of MPH Emphasis Area Competencies	41
References or Bibliography	45

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 First Figure in Chapter 1.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 1.2 Second Figure in Chapter 1	Error! Bookmark not defined.

List of Tables

Table 5.1 Summary of MPH Foundational Competencies	39
Table 5.2 MPH Foundational Competencies and Course Taught In	39
Table 5.3 Summary of MPH Emphasis Area Competencies.....	44

Chapter 1 - Literature Review

Sedentary Behavior in the Workforce

Sedentary behavior, defined as activities that involve sitting or reclining with little energy expenditure, has been directly linked to the obesity epidemic and other health-related issues (Hamilton et al., 2007). In the U.S., the prevalence of obesity continues to rise, with more than 42% of adults classified as overweight or obese, leading to increased risks of chronic diseases (Martin et al., 2024). Research highlights that sedentary office cultures significantly contribute to these public health problems, as office workers spend most of their day sitting (Cawley & Meyerhoefer, 2012). Prolonged sedentary periods are associated with obesity, musculoskeletal disorders, and decreased mental health, which leads to additional healthcare costs and reduced productivity in the workplace (Cawley & Meyerhoefer, 2012).

Workplace interventions have emerged as a crucial strategy for combating sedentary behavior in the workplace and its associated risks (Gray, 2017). These interventions focus on integrating physical activity into daily routines, fostering an active workplace culture, and encouraging employees to meet recommended physical activity guidelines. Evidence suggests that promoting movement during the workday, even with simple actions such as standing or walking, can lead to better health outcomes and enhanced productivity (Heinen & Darling, 2009). Unfortunately, large scale success has not been identified for worksite wellness programs, this is like a result of availability of programs not being required and low participation rates where they are (Mattke et al., 2015).

College as an Intervention Point

College is a pivotal environment where students establish lifelong habits, making it a crucial intervention point for public health professionals to address sedentary behavior before students enter the workforce (Kim & Kim, 2018). During this period, students often engage in academic routines that mimic future job settings with long hours of sitting, limited physical activity, and high levels of stress (Kim & Kim, 2018). This

susceptibility is further underscored by recent findings on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on university students' health behaviors (Bertrand et al., 2021).

Research indicates that university students are particularly vulnerable to poor dietary intake, inadequate physical activity, and increased sedentary behavior. A study of university students showed a significant reduction in physical activity and an increase in sedentary behaviors both during and after the pandemic. Before COVID-19, 16% of students met the guidelines for weekly physical activity (150 min of moderate-vigorous physical activity), and 54% met the guidelines for weekly sedentary behavior (8 hours or less of sedentary activity). During the pandemic, these figures dropped to 10% and 30%, respectively, while time spent in sedentary activities increased by an average of three hours per day (Bertrand et al., 2021). This shift has been sustained which, coupled with decreased nutrient intake and increased alcohol consumption, highlights the compounded risks to student health (Bertrand et al., 2021).

Introducing college students to wellness programs can help build positive health behaviors that can persist into adulthood. These programs can address sedentary behavior by incorporating physical activity into students' academic schedules, making exercise a normalized and accessible part of the college experience. Evidence suggests that young adults are more likely to engage in physical activity and adopt healthier lifestyle choices when provided with the necessary resources, knowledge, and supportive environments (Tang et al., 2019).

Furthermore, evidence found by Voh Ah et al. (2004) found that implementing wellness initiatives at this crucial stage could reduce the likelihood of adopting sedentary habits as students transition into professional careers, ultimately fostering a healthier and more resilient workforce. The freedom and control students experience during this transition, combined with their developing self-efficacy, offer a unique opportunity to reinforce positive health practices (Voh Ah et al., 2004). The findings suggest that health promotion programs focusing on college students should emphasize building self-efficacy and minimizing barriers to adopting healthy behaviors. This approach could

foster habits that persist throughout life, as behaviors set during this formative period are more likely to be maintained long-term (Voh Ah et al., 2004).

The Rise Up Scholars Program and Sedentary Behavior

The Rise Up Scholars program, a scholarship program at Kansas State University in the College of Business, aims to develop leaders who are focused on creating supportive environments for individuals from all walks of life. The program was founded and is directed by Dr. Olivia Law-DelRosso, Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging in the College of Business. Three years ago, Dr. Law-DelRosso started the program with the intention of supporting any student seeking a degree or certificate in the College of Business looking to develop leadership skills and learn how to foster a sense of belonging in the workplace. With over one hundred students in the program, most of whom identify with a marginalized background, the program offers the students ample opportunity to succeed and currently has 100% attainment of a job or internship three months post-graduation.

My Applied Practical Experience (APE) with this program focused on designing a wellness initiative that targets the sedentary behavior typical among college students, who have shown an increase in sedentary time over the past 10 years (Castro, 2020). Recognizing that business students are more susceptible to sedentary behaviors due to their career trajectories, the program sought to reframe health behaviors as professional skills that could enhance their career readiness (Malmberg et al., 2017).

The APE did not involve the direct delivery of wellness programs but rather the creation of the foundational structure for such programs, however the Rise Up Wellness (RUW) program has been in effect since the Spring semester of 2023 and was offered the semester that I completed my APE as well. The goal was to create an enduring framework that future program directors could implement and build upon, ensuring long-term sustainability. The project produced several critical components: a job description for future program directors, a syllabus outlining the core concepts to be taught, a director's checklist to guide the operational aspects of the program, marketing materials

to promote wellness activities, a needs assessment to tailor programming to student needs, and a program evaluation to assess the program's impact.

These elements were guided by my educational background in kinesiology and public health, applying theoretical models of behavior change, such as self-efficacy, autonomy, and relatedness, to the design of the program (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Self-efficacy, in particular, played a central role in encouraging students to take control of their health behaviors. The program emphasized SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) and self-monitoring to help students maintain physical activity (Tang et al., 2019). Next I will discuss the two behavioral theories utilized to create the program, the core concepts from these theories which built the foundation for the program, my integration methods for these theories into the programs activities, and lastly how my education and experience allowed me to integrate these theories into a deliverable program.

Social Cognitive Theory

The first theory which helped guide the foundation and thereafter interventions for RUW was Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). Developed by Albert Bandura, this theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals regulate their behavior through cognitive processes and social interactions (Bandura, 1986). Social Cognitive Theory is central to understanding the interpersonal and environmental factors that shape the RUW program, particularly through the concept of reciprocal determinism (Schunk & DiBenedetta, 2023). Reciprocal determinism, as seen in figure 1.1, explains how personal, environmental, and behavioral factors continuously influence each other, creating a dynamic feedback loop essential for sustained behavior change (University of Pennsylvania).

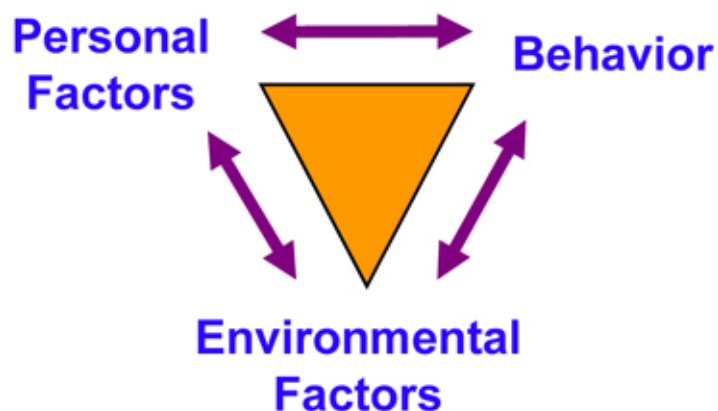


Figure 1.1

Reciprocal Determinism in Social Cognitive Theory

Note. Adapted from "Key Constructs (Chapter 8)," by the University of Pennsylvania, n.d., *Health Behavior and Health Education: Theory, Research, and Practice*. Retrieved October 8, 2024, from <https://www.med.upenn.edu/hbhe4/part3-ch8-key-constructs.shtml>.

In the context of RUW this construct is crucial as the wellness behaviors encouraged in the program are not only influenced by students' individual attitudes and skills but are also shaped by their social interactions and physical surroundings, such as campus facilities and peer support networks. It uniquely captures the mutual influence between individuals and their environments, underscoring the idea that behavior change is not a one-way process (Bandura, 1986). For example, as RUW students engage in group fitness activities or attend nutrition seminars, they influence and are influenced by their peers. This social reinforcement creates a supportive environment that fosters a shared commitment to wellness. This is also seen when students experience success in these activities, as they gain confidence in their ability to make healthy choices, which in turn encourages them to seek out further wellness opportunities—reinforcing both the behavior and the supportive environment (Schunk & DiBenedetta, 2023). By embedding these SCT principles, RUW ensures that wellness becomes an integral part of students'

identities, better equipping them to maintain these behaviors beyond college and into their professional lives.

Continuing in the context of exercise adherence, SCT is particularly relevant because it incorporates multiple factors that influence whether individuals initiate and maintain physical activity routines (Schwarzer et al., 2008). Key components, including self-efficacy, observational learning, and self-regulation, are central to explaining how individuals engage in and sustain exercise behaviors (Schwarzer et al., 2008). For RUW, self-efficacy and the environmental factors that influence exercise were the main concepts utilized in program design.

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform a specific behavior, such as maintaining an exercise routine (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy is one of the most significant predictors of exercise behavior within SCT and therefore is one the largest influences on the session content and design of RUW (Schunk & DiBenedetta, 2023). Research has demonstrated that higher levels of self-efficacy are associated with greater exercise participation, as individuals who believe in their ability to exercise regularly are more likely to overcome barriers and persist in their routines (Schwarzer et al., 2008).

SCT further distinguishes between different types of self-efficacy relevant to exercise adherence. For instance, action self-efficacy involves the confidence to start and perform an exercise routine, while recovery self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's ability to resume physical activity after setbacks, such as illness or a busy schedule. Both types are crucial for long-term adherence, as a person may be motivated to begin exercising, but without recovery self-efficacy, they may struggle to maintain the behavior after disruptions (Schwarzer et al., 2008).

Observational learning, or modeling, is another vital component of SCT that affects exercise adherence. It involves acquiring behaviors by observing others, this can be harnessed in group exercise settings where participants see their peers engaging in physical activity, which became a central part of the practical application sessions (Schunk & DiBenedetta, 2023). When individuals observe others successfully engaging

in exercise, it can boost their own self-efficacy by demonstrating that the behavior is attainable and demonstrates the synergistic relationship within this construct and additionally with the core component of relatedness in Self Determination Theory, as we will see later (Schwarzer et al., 2008).

Self-regulation is an essential self-directed behavior within SCT that involves controlling one's actions, thoughts, and emotions to achieve long-term goals (Schunk & DiBenedetta, 2023). In terms of exercise adherence, self-regulation strategies include setting specific goals, monitoring progress, and using self-reinforcement techniques to sustain motivation. Therefore, planning and goal setting were important components to include as they translate intentions into action (Schwarzer, et al. 2008).

Planning also involves anticipating potential barriers to exercise and creating strategies to manage these obstacles, known as coping planning, which prepares individuals to handle setbacks and maintain their exercise routines despite challenges (Schunk & DiBenedetta, 2023). RUW utilizes different forms of coping planning worksheets early in the program to help students develop the skills needed to overcome common barriers to exercise. Additionally, the program promotes regular monitoring of exercise behavior, such as tracking workout sessions or progress towards fitness goals. This feedback loop reinforces self-regulation, enabling individuals to adjust their plans and strategies to stay on track with their exercise behaviors (Schwarzer et al., 2008).

Environmental factors play a significant role in exercise adherence by either facilitating or impeding physical activity. SCT posits that environmental factors interact with personal beliefs and behaviors, creating a process of reciprocal influence known as reciprocal determinism. As mentioned before, this concept suggests that individuals are not merely passive recipients of environmental influences; instead, they actively shape their environments to support their goals (Schwarzer et al., 2008).

As individuals engage in regular exercise, their self-efficacy and motivation can increase, leading them to further shape their environments to support ongoing physical activity. As we will see, this reciprocal interaction also aligns with components of SDT,

such as the need for autonomy (choosing one's exercise routine) and relatedness (feeling supported by others) (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

By satisfying these psychological needs, RUW aims leverage SCT principles to enhance adherence, addressing the psychological and environmental challenges individuals face in maintaining regular physical activity. Programs that enhance self-efficacy through goal setting, observational learning, and self-regulation strategies, while creating supportive environments, can improve long-term participation (Bandura, 1986). With the integration of these components into RUW, the director can help individuals develop the skills and confidence needed to initiate and sustain physical activity, resulting in better health outcomes and an improved quality of life (Schunk & DiBenedetta, 2023).

Self-Determination Theory

In the Rise Up Wellness program SDT works to address intrapersonal aspects of wellness, complementing the interpersonal aspects of SCT, creating a comprehensive approach to behavior change.

Self-Determination Theory focuses on the intrapersonal, or internal, factors that drive motivation and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Central to SDT are three core psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness (figure 1.2)—that must be fulfilled to foster intrinsic motivation (Forman & Yanofsky, 2021). In RUW, autonomy is supported by allowing students to make choices in their wellness journey, such as selecting the types of activities they engage in. This personal control enhances their sense of ownership over their health decisions, increasing the likelihood that they'll sustain these behaviors (Edmunds et al., 2008). Competence is built through skill development in areas like nutrition and exercise, giving students the confidence to manage their wellness independently. Relatedness is nurtured through the supportive environment of RUW, where students feel a sense of belonging and connection to others with shared wellness goals (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

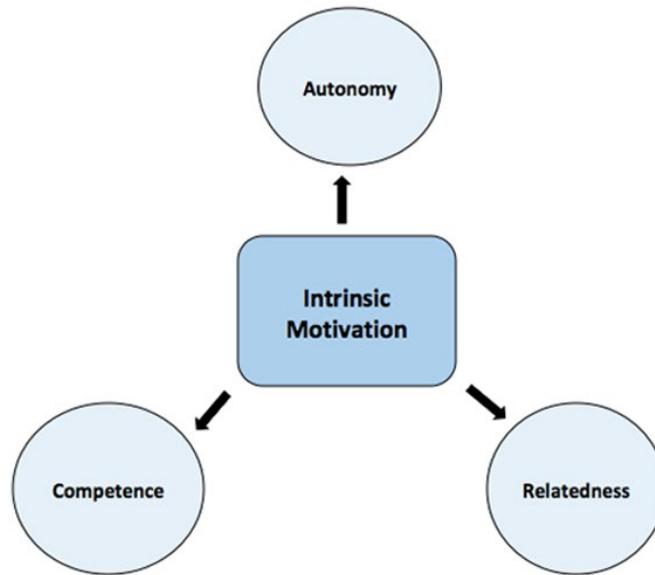


Figure 1.2

The ARCS Model of Motivational Design

Note. Adapted from "Learner Motivation and Self-Determination Theory in Medical Education," by N. Forman and S. Yanofsky, 2021, *Society for Pediatric Pain Medicine*. Retrieved October 7, 2024, from <https://pedspainmedicine.org/wp-content/uploads/newsletters/2021/summer/learner%20motivativ.html>. Copyright 2021 by the Society for Pediatric Pain Medicine.

This theory provided additional insights into how exercise programs can be structured to improve adherence by supporting these psychological needs, which I will discuss in further detail before explaining how the intrapersonal aspects of SDT complements the interpersonal aspects of SCT and how that combination is the best evidence for RUW techniques.

Autonomy refers to the feeling of being in control of one's actions and making choices that align with personal values and interests, a concept that has an independent and positive relationship with self-efficacy (Bandura, 2000). Autonomy is fostered when individuals perceive that they have control over their fitness routines and can make choices about the types of activities they engage in (Deci, 1992). This was an important

concept, as it gave the RUW program the opportunity to integrate autonomous choices into the design, covered later in this review. This approach promotes a sense of ownership over one's fitness journey, which is associated with higher levels of intrinsic motivation, a form of motivation shown to promote higher levels of long term adherence (Edmunds et al., 2008).

Relatedness is the need to feel connected to others and experience a sense of belonging (Deci, 1992). In the context of exercise, relatedness is fostered when individuals feel that they are part of a supportive fitness community; group exercise settings, social support from peers, and positive relationships with fitness instructors all contribute to the enhancement of motivation and adherence through relatedness (Rodrigues et al., 2020). Much like autonomy enhancing self-efficacy in SCT, relatedness even though an individual level construct, has a positive relationship with modeling, continuing to demonstrate the synergistic relationship between these theories (Edmunds et al., 2008).

For RUW, group exercise sessions, where participants share experiences and encourage each other, will help to foster relatedness by creating a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose (Deci, 1992). These social connections in an exercise setting not only makes physical activity more enjoyable but also provides the social reinforcement that can motivate individuals to continue attending sessions. The role of fitness instructors in building relatedness is also crucial. Instructors who create a welcoming environment, acknowledge participants' progress, and encourage interaction among group members can help strengthen the sense of community (Rodrigues et al., 2020). As mentioned, these social bonds make participants more likely to adhere to their exercise routines over time and is an integral part of the success of RUW.

Social Determination Theory is positioned to satisfy the needs for autonomy and relatedness that leads to higher levels of self-determined motivation, which in turn fosters better adherence to behaviors such as exercise (Edmunds et al., 2008). The theory distinguishes between different types of motivation along a continuum, from amotivation (lack of motivation) to intrinsic motivation (engaging in an activity for its

inherent satisfaction). RUW was designed to support these basic psychological needs and help individuals move toward more self-determined forms of motivation, making it more likely that they will maintain regular physical activity (Deci, 1992).

Integrating SDT with SCT

In developing the program for RUW, I sought to integrate principles from both SDT and SCT, to create a comprehensive approach to promoting exercise adherence. Self Determination Theory, which emphasizes the psychological needs that motivate students from within at the intrapersonal level, complements the interpersonal and environmental factors that influence behavior in SCT; both address motivational and behavioral factors influencing exercise adherence.

Social Cognitive Theory's emphasis on reciprocal determinism highlights the feedback loop between a student's behaviors, their social environment, and their individual experiences, which shapes and reinforces wellness habits (Schwarzer et al., 2008). This social reinforcement amplifies the personal motivation nurtured by SDT, as students feel encouraged by their peers and validated in their efforts. Social Determination Theory's focus on autonomy aligns to support SCT's concept of self-regulation, where individuals actively shape their behaviors and environments to meet their goals. For example, setting personal fitness goals or choosing exercises that are enjoyable can support autonomy and enhance self-efficacy (Edmunds et al., 2008). Similarly, relatedness within SDT can enhance social support in SCT, providing a broader network that reinforces behavior change through social connections and shared activities, a theme easy to facilitate in the college setting.

The combination of SDT's intrapersonal focus on motivation and SCT's interpersonal focus on environment and social reinforcement provides the strongest evidence base for RUW techniques. By addressing both the internal motivations and the external support systems that sustain behavior, RUW equips students to build long-lasting wellness habits that are likely extend beyond their time in the program, ultimately

helping them transition into healthier, more resilient professionals (Rodrigues et al., 2020).

Future Wellness Directors can use this understanding to create autonomy-supportive environments, offer opportunities for skill development, and build a sense of community among participants as the program adapts and evolves. Such an approach not only improves adherence but also enhances participants' overall well-being by promoting exercise as a personally meaningful and socially supportive activity (Edmunds et al., 2008).

Application of SCT and SDT in the Rise Up Wellness (RUW) Program

For the RUW program, specific components of SCT and SDT were selected to guide the design of interventions and activities that target business students' wellness. The concepts of autonomy and relatedness from SDT and the principles of self-efficacy and environmental influences from SCT were integral to creating an evidence-based program aimed at improving exercise adherence and supporting health behavior changes.

Self-Determination Theory: Autonomy and Relatedness

The RUW program incorporates the concepts of autonomy and relatedness as part of the strategy to foster intrinsic motivation.

- **Autonomy:** The program emphasizes providing students with choices, such as selecting from different wellness activities (e.g., yoga, strength training) and setting personal fitness goals using the SMART criteria. This autonomy-supportive approach aligns with SDT's assertion that when individuals perceive they have control over their behavior, they are more likely to engage in activities with intrinsic motivation (Edmunds et al., 2008). The autonomy-supportive environment is reinforced through coping planning seminars, where students can define their wellness paths and contemplate how they want to navigate through potential challenges, fostering a sense of ownership over their health.

- **Relatedness:** The program creates a community-like atmosphere by encouraging peer interactions during group workouts and seminars. Group activities, such as self-defense classes and nutrition workshops, foster a sense of connectedness, allowing students to share experiences and support each other's wellness journeys. Relatedness is reinforced through social elements like team-building exercises and peer discussions, which help students feel a part of a supportive network, essential for sustaining motivation and promoting behavior change (Edmunds et al., 2008).

Social Cognitive Theory: Self-Efficacy and Environmental Influences

The application of SCT in the RUW program focuses on enhancing self-efficacy and shaping the environment to support physical activity and wellness.

- **Self-Efficacy:** Building self-efficacy was a primary goal in each session design, especially during practical activities like workouts and self-defense classes. For instance, starting with bodyweight exercises and gradually incorporating compound movements will help students experience mastery through achievable steps. Positive reinforcement, goal tracking, and providing feedback allows participants to witness their own progress, which is critical in boosting their self-efficacy (Schunk & DiBenedetta, 2023). This approach aligns with SCT, which posits that self-efficacy is influenced by personal accomplishments, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological states.
- **Environmental Influences:** The program aims to create an environment conducive to wellness by holding sessions in accessible, student-friendly facilities such as the Student Recreation Center and Fang Family Kitchen. This supportive setting can reduce barriers to participation and promote a culture of health on campus. The use of familiar, well-equipped spaces will provide a comfortable setting for students during in physical activity and help normalize exercise as a regular part of their routines.

Reciprocal Determinism in SCT and Integration with SDT Concepts

Bandura's reciprocal determinism emphasizes the interaction between personal factors (e.g., self-efficacy), behaviors (e.g., regular participation in wellness activities), and environmental factors (e.g., supportive facilities). In the RUW program, these elements interact in a way that allows students to take agency over their health behaviors while being influenced by social and environmental cues. For example, the provision of structured yet flexible exercise options enables students to apply self-regulation strategies while experiencing social support, thereby enhancing self-efficacy (Tang et al., 2019).

The reciprocal nature of SCT also supports SDT's focus on agency and social factors leading to behavior change. By supporting autonomy and fostering relatedness, the RUW program seeks to create a self-reinforcing cycle where increased motivation and perceived competency will lead to more frequent participation and improved health outcomes.

Integration of Educational and Work Background in Program Design

My educational background in public health and kinesiology provided a strong foundation for integrating SCT and SDT into the RUW program. Courses such as KIN 610 and KIN 805 taught me how to create needs assessments, design programs, and apply behavior change theories effectively. These skills were critical in structuring the RUW program, as I utilized evidence-based approaches to address the social, behavioral, and environmental determinants of health.

Additionally, my nine years of experience as a personal trainer enabled me to apply practical knowledge to the program, ensuring that interventions were realistic and grounded in best practices. By leveraging my expertise, I was able to design both practical sessions (e.g., workouts) and informational seminars (e.g., nutrition education) that addressed the constructs of self-efficacy, autonomy, and relatedness. This combination of theoretical knowledge and hands-on experience helped shape a wellness program tailored to the unique needs of business students.

Overall, the integration of SCT and SDT in the RUW program facilitated the development of a comprehensive wellness initiative aimed at empowering students to adopt sustainable health behaviors. Through a balanced approach that addressed cognitive, social, and environmental factors, the program seeks to improve students' physical activity levels and set the stage for lifelong wellness.

Conclusion

In creating the Rise Up Wellness program, my APE laid the groundwork for a sustainable intervention aimed at reducing sedentary behavior among business students. This initiative, while targeting college-aged individuals, addresses the broader public health issue of sedentary behavior in the workforce by equipping students with the skills and habits necessary to maintain a healthy, active lifestyle as they transition into their professional careers. Through this project, I was able to apply the theories and knowledge gained throughout my educational experience, contributing to both my personal growth and the long-term success of the Rise Up Scholars program.

Chapter 2 - Learning Objectives and Project Description

The Applied Practical Experience (APE) I completed with the Rise Up Scholars program at Kansas State University involved creating a comprehensive wellness program tailored for College of Business students. This project was designed to address sedentary behavior and promote healthy habits before students enter the workforce. The program was structured to start roughly two weeks after classes start each semester to allow for students to slowly integrate the program into their schedules. Sessions are then offered twice a week based on cross degree schedules to maximize participation. Below are the learning objectives and activities I participated in during this project.

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the Public Health Impact of Sedentary Behavior:

- Gain insight into how sedentary behavior contributes to chronic diseases such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.
- Explore the importance of early intervention in combating these behaviors, particularly in college-aged students preparing for sedentary white-collar jobs.

2. Program Design and Development:

- Learn to design a wellness program aimed at reducing sedentary behavior by developing the foundational elements of the program utilizing evidenced based practices and behavioral theoretical constructs.
- Apply public health theories and behavior change models (such as self-efficacy, autonomy, and relatedness) to the creation of the program.

3. Skills in Program Evaluation:

- Develop a comprehensive program evaluation plan that includes metrics for assessing student engagement, behavior change, and program effectiveness.

4. Communication and Leadership in Health Promotion:

- Improve skills in health communication by developing marketing materials that effectively convey the importance of health and wellness to a non-expert audience.
- Refine leadership abilities by coordinating efforts with faculty, stakeholders, and students to ensure the successful development and future delivery of the program.

5. Collaboration with Stakeholders:

- Build relationships with university departments and student organizations to ensure a multi-faceted approach to health promotion.
- Learn strategies for collaborating with other professionals in the field, including those in public health, fitness, and dietetics.

Project Description and Responsibilities

Project Description: The project involved the creation of a wellness program (RUW) aimed at addressing sedentary behavior among College of Business students at Kansas State University. This was not a direct program delivery project; instead, it focused on developing the program's infrastructure to ensure that future directors could seamlessly deliver the wellness programming to students. This was challenging as I did deliver the previous version of the program which was not formalized but contained many of the same elements utilized when creating the new tangible program for my APE. The overall goal was to help students adopt healthy behaviors and prevent sedentary lifestyles before they transition into the workforce, where they are more likely to encounter sedentary work environments.

My Responsibilities:

1. Job Description Creation:

- Develop a detailed job description for future program directors, ensuring that the role attracts candidates with the right skills and interests in health promotion.

2. Course Development:

- Create a syllabus that outlines the core topics and concepts to be delivered to students, ensuring that the material is evidence-based and engaging.
- Create class lesson plans covering physical activity, nutrition, mental health, and other health concepts highlighted by student interest.

3. Director's Checklist:

- Design a comprehensive checklist for future program directors to guide the operational aspects of the program. This checklist included partnerships, event planning, and day-to-day program management.

4. Marketing Materials:

- Develop flyers and other marketing tools aimed at increasing student participation in the wellness activities, using clear and accessible language that emphasizes the benefits of physical activity for career success and personal well-being.

5. Needs Assessment:

- Conduct a needs assessment to identify the specific health challenges faced by business students and ensure the program is tailored to address these needs effectively.
- The needs assessment also addresses the health disparities many of the students may potentially face as Rise Up has a large enrollment of scholars who are ethnic minorities or from other marginalized backgrounds.

6. Program Evaluation Plan:

- Design a program evaluation framework to assess the program's impact, focusing on metrics such as student participation, enjoyment, and knowledge/skills gained.

7. Application of Behavioral Theories and Evidence Based Practices:

- Utilization of theories that underline the interventions and guided the program development to promote effective evidence-based approaches toward behavior change and physical activity adoption.

Additional Activities:

- **Meetings with Program Directors and Faculty:**

- Regularly attended meetings with the Rise Up Program Director, Dr. Olivia Law-DelRosso, to align the program with the College of Business's goals and students' needs.

- **Collaboration with Other Departments:**

- Worked with the Kinesiology and Dietetics departments to ensure that the wellness program had access to subject matter experts and that all materials were scientifically sound.

- **Shadowing and Learning from Public Health Professionals:**

- Engaged in shadowing experiences with faculty members and public health professionals to gain insight into program planning, health promotion strategies, and behavior change interventions.

This project allowed me to apply public health knowledge in a real-world setting, developing key deliverables that will guide future efforts to promote wellness among the Rise Up Scholars. The experience enhanced my leadership and communication skills while deepening my understanding of how to implement public health interventions in academic settings.

Chapter 3 - Results

The results of the project for the Rise Up Scholars wellness program reflect both the observations gathered over three semesters of program delivery and the actions taken to refine and formalize the program's design. The goal of the project was to develop a sustainable wellness program that could be easily managed by future directors and effectively engage Rise Up students in health-promoting behaviors. Here's a summary of what was observed, found, and accomplished.

Program Refinement Based on Prior Experience

The program development relied heavily on the insights gained during the previous three semesters of delivering the Rise Up Wellness program and the resources and literature available on interventions within these populations. Over time, several key factors that influenced attendance, participation, and overall success of the program were identified:

- **Session Timing:** One of the most significant observations was that attendance dropped as the week progressed. This led to the decision to recommend to concentrate the program's activities earlier in the week, specifically on Tuesdays and Wednesdays for the 2024 Fall semester. This adjustment aimed to better accommodate students' schedules and ensure consistent attendance throughout the week.
- **Autonomy vs. Commitment:** While the initial approach focused on giving students autonomy to choose which sessions they wanted to attend, it became clear that this alone wasn't enough to drive consistent participation. There needed to be a balance between offering flexibility and ensuring some level of commitment or incentive to encourage regular attendance. This was a key takeaway for future iterations of the program and supported by the findings of Ball et al. (2017), which indicated that incentives-based behavior change model is a promising design for a program looking to increase PA.

- **Content Delivery and Diversification:** The practical sessions were diversified to provide more variety and keep students engaged. This included inviting guest instructors to teach certain sessions, which not only reduced the workload for the incoming director but also provided students with new perspectives and expertise. This also provides an opportunity for the director to learn how to collaborate and promote interdepartmental utilization on campus. Additionally, the informational seminars were condensed and made more focused, improving the delivery of health content in an accessible and engaging format.

Integration of Online Platforms

A significant accomplishment of the project was identifying the need of integrating online tools such as Microsoft Teams and Canvas into the program's structure. These platforms will be utilized for:

- **Participation Polls:** To be conducted before sessions to gauge interest and ensure that the sessions catered to the students' preferences.
- **Post-Seminar Surveys:** Collecting feedback on the sessions, providing valuable data for evaluating the program's effectiveness and areas of improvement.
- **Access to Past Sessions:** Session details, resources, and materials made available online (Teams file) to give students flexibility in accessing the program content.

Transitioning to online platforms allows students to participate remotely, ensuring accessibility even for those unable to attend in person, and enhances communication between program directors and participants. This approach is supported by research indicating that technology-based interventions are both acceptable and feasible for improving adolescent health (Lappan, Yeh, & Leung, 2015). Additionally, using behavioral theory to tailor these online interventions and incorporating digital content can further support positive health outcomes, as it aligns with students' existing online behaviors and preferences (Lappan, Yeh, & Leung, 2015). This strategy not only

broadens reach but also leverages technology to create a more flexible and responsive wellness program.

Collaboration with Kinesiology Department

Recognizing a gap in formal education and course structure experience, I collaborated closely with staff from the Kinesiology department to develop the program's curriculum and course plan. This collaboration was instrumental in shaping the wellness program to fit within the traditional academic framework, ensuring that the program was structured, organized, and aligned with public health principles.

The support from the Kinesiology department also provided me with insight into how to create an academic syllabus, organize health-related content, and ensure that the wellness sessions covered the key aspects of physical and mental well-being for students.

Communication and Marketing Improvements

One of the most important lessons learned during the program development was the critical role of effective communication and marketing. Sessions that were well-publicized—through flyers, student polls, and easily accessible information—consistently had better attendance compared to those that were not. This reinforced the need for a robust communication strategy integrated into the program design via director checklist, and led to the creation of marketing materials to promote sessions clearly and engagingly. These marketing efforts include:

- **Flyers:** Designed to attract attention and emphasize the benefits of attending wellness sessions.
- **Detailed Session Information:** Distributed well in advance to give students plenty of time to plan their attendance and delivered on Teams, the main platform used by the program to communicate with scholars.

Overall Impact on My Skills

This experience significantly strengthened key public health competencies and broader professional skills, particularly in program planning, evaluation, and stakeholder engagement. Developing a wellness program that is sustainable and appealing to students required me to apply foundational principles of public health program design, such as conducting needs assessments and identifying evidence-based strategies to improve student engagement. Balancing autonomy with participation incentives and diversifying content to maintain students' interest involved using behavioral theories directly addressing Competency #7.

In addition, managing the program's development required me to employ project management skills to ensure timelines were met, responsibilities were clearly assigned, and program objectives remained aligned with students' needs. Working with multiple university departments, including the kinesiology and dietetics programs, taught me to build coalitions, addressing Competency #13. The process of gathering, analyzing, and applying feedback also strengthened my abilities in program evaluation, as I learned to refine the program based on student participation data and feedback to increase effectiveness.

Through this project, I not only designed a comprehensive wellness program with clear, sustainable frameworks for future directors, but I also honed my skills in leadership, adaptability, and public health communication. This experience enhanced my professional growth, enabling me to apply academic knowledge to a real-world setting, ultimately preparing me for future roles in public health program development and management.

Chapter 4 - Discussion

The findings from my Applied Practical Experience (APE) with the Rise Up Scholars wellness program highlight several significant insights regarding the challenges and opportunities associated with promoting physical activity and wellness in college-aged students, particularly those preparing for sedentary office jobs. The program's development over three semesters provided valuable data that contributes to a better understanding of how best to address sedentary behavior in academic settings and utilize the resources provided by the university to enhance program effectiveness.

Significance of Findings

The results of my project highlights the value of wellness programs designed to meet students' specific needs, as recent data show a decrease in physical activity and a rise in sedentary behavior among college students (Castro et al., 2020). Moreover, an assessment of the existing university wellness infrastructure and students' limited awareness and use of available resources further reinforces these findings.

The past experience of program delivery also highlighted the importance of a program such as this considering most students had many misconceptions about exercise, limited experience with structured physical activity and proper movement patterns, and were intimidated to participate in the cooking seminars. The Rise Up Scholars program provided a proactive solution by aiming to establish positive health behaviors and experiences before students enter the workforce.

By moving sessions to earlier in the week, offering more diverse activities, and integrating online tools, the program showed that adjusting both the structure and delivery methods of wellness initiatives could improve student participation. However, the findings also indicated that behavior change is complex, and students require ongoing support, incentives, and structured engagement to make meaningful, lasting changes in their physical activity habits.

These findings affirm the program's original goal of leveraging the college environment to foster positive health behaviors that may help reduce sedentary behavior in the future workforce. College represents a crucial period for developing lifelong health habits, and a program that provides students with accessible ways to gain the skills and knowledge to practice these habits would be a significant move toward reducing sedentary behavior (Dinger & Waigandt, 1997). The next step involves raising awareness of these findings and refining programs and environments to better align with the needs of the student population.

Best Practices for Colleges

An important insight gained from this experience is the critical role that colleges can play in shaping long-term health behaviors. Institutions of higher learning have a unique opportunity to introduce wellness initiatives during a formative time in students' lives. The Rise Up program illustrates that wellness programs should not only be offered but should also be carefully designed to align with students' academic schedules and career aspirations. This was accomplished in RUW by viewing the different departmental course schedules and identifying times where students were most likely to be on campus and have availability. The course schedules of the accounting, finance, marketing and management were all referenced and a schedule complementary towards those schedules was decided upon in conjunction with the preferences of the contact at the student recreation center. This can be replicated through other programs and would help contain student populations with their respective disciplines.

This approach would not only improve student health outcomes but also enhance academic performance, as research shows that physical activity positively correlates with cognitive function and academic success (Trudeau & Shephard, 2008). Furthermore, equipping students with health behaviors as professional skills would make them more attractive to future employers, who would benefit from hiring healthier, more productive, and less costly employees. This insight moves the subject area forward by suggesting that public health interventions in academic settings should be seen as integral to student development, not just an optional add-on.

From a best practices perspective, the findings suggest that colleges, especially those with students preparing for office-based careers, should:

- **Integrate wellness concepts into the curriculum:** Making wellness a required part of education would likely increase participation and ensure that all students, regardless of their interest or background in health, have the opportunity to engage in wellness activities. This integration would help reframe health behaviors as essential professional skills that contribute to academic and workplace success.
- **Focus on structured incentives and commitments:** While autonomy is important for fostering intrinsic motivation, the findings show that incentives or some forms of commitment are necessary to encourage consistent participation. Colleges should consider integrating graded wellness components or providing tangible incentives, such as gym memberships, wellness credits, or career-related rewards, to foster student engagement.
- **Leverage digital tools for engagement:** The use of online platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Canvas to distribute session information, collect participation polls, and gather feedback proved effective in increasing engagement. Future wellness programs could further develop these digital tools to offer flexibility and streamline communication with students.

Limitations

Despite the successes of the program, several limitations were identified. The first is the inherent difficulty in motivating people to adopt new physical activity habits. Sedentary behavior is deeply ingrained, especially in students who are already preparing for careers in sedentary environments. Changing these behaviors requires significant effort and long-term commitment, and most individuals need consistent support, encouragement, and incentives to maintain these changes.

Another limitation was the reliance on student autonomy without sufficient structure to ensure participation. While the program was designed to allow students to choose

which sessions they attended, it became evident that many students needed more accountability to follow through. Behavior change is a gradual process, and while autonomy can increase intrinsic motivation, it must be balanced with external motivation to ensure participation and long-term success.

Finally, while collaboration with faculty and staff helped develop a robust curriculum, the program's reliance on guest instructors and external resources also presented challenges. Consistency in program delivery and maintaining high levels of engagement are crucial for the program's sustainability, but managing these relationships can be time-consuming and resource-intensive.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my APE demonstrated how public health theory and principles can be effectively applied in an academic setting to address sedentary behavior among business students. The Rise Up Wellness program offers important lessons for promoting wellness among college students, particularly those preparing for sedentary office jobs. The insights gained from this experience highlight the importance of structured, integrated wellness programs that are seen as essential to both personal and professional development and emphasizes the need for colleges to integrate wellness into the curriculum.

The embedding of wellness programs into their curricula to promote health behaviors will benefit students both during their academic careers and as they enter the workforce. This will enhance student health outcomes and improve their academic performance as well as long-term employability. By integrating wellness into the academic experience, institutions can play a critical role in shaping the health and success of future generations. The insights gained from this project advance our understanding of how to promote wellness in academic settings and offer a roadmap for future programs aimed at reducing sedentary behavior in the future workforce, creating a larger impact in public health than currently seen.

Chapter 5 - Competencies

My Integrated Learning Experience (ILE) reflects the culmination of my academic and practical training in public health, bringing together the knowledge and skills acquired throughout my coursework at Kansas State University and my hands-on experience in the Applied Practical Experience (APE) as the Wellness Director for the Rise Up Scholars program. The project was developed to address a specific public health challenge: sedentary behavior, particularly in college-aged students preparing for office-based careers in business. My work not only integrated public health theory but also applied it to create a sustainable wellness program designed to improve student health outcomes, academic performance, and long-term professional success.

Synthesis of Knowledge and Skills

Throughout my MPH coursework, I developed a deep understanding of how sedentary behavior contributes to the growing public health crisis of obesity, cardiovascular disease, and related chronic conditions. The application of this knowledge was critical in designing the Rise Up Wellness program, which aimed to combat sedentary lifestyles among business students. By framing wellness behaviors as essential professional skills, I connected health promotion to students' future careers, demonstrating how improved physical and mental health would enhance their employability and productivity.

Application of Theory and Principles in Practice

The ILE provided an opportunity to apply theoretical frameworks, such as self-efficacy and behavior change models, in a practical setting. For example, the program emphasized self-efficacy by encouraging students to set SMART goals and track their progress, fostering a sense of control over their health behaviors. Autonomy was also promoted by offering students flexibility in choosing which wellness sessions to attend, though this was balanced with the need for structured commitments and incentives to ensure participation.

I also applied principles of leadership and communication, working closely with faculty in both the Kinesiology department and the College of Business to ensure that the program was well-aligned with the needs of the students and the institution's goals. This collaboration was critical in developing a curriculum that was both academically rigorous and relevant to students' professional aspirations.

Student Attainment of MPH Foundational Competencies

- **Competency #18: Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors**

The creation of a job description was necessary to be able to start the process of searching for the next graduate student seeking an opportunity to deliver health programming. For graduate students I focused on clear, concise language that explained the role, its responsibilities, expectations, and qualifications. I also wanted to communicate in a way that directors and faculty could easily identify potential students who would fit the role when advertising for this position. By crafting a job description that effectively communicates these varied needs I demonstrated an ability to select and apply communication strategies tailored to different audiences.

- **Competency #7: Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities' health**

The needs assessment I developed as part of my APE directly addresses the unique health challenges and assets of college students, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds, such as first-generation students, persons of color, non-traditional students, and students from low-income backgrounds.

To assess the population's needs, I focused on understanding their unique barriers to health and wellness, such as limited access to resources, time constraints, and social determinants of health. Additionally, I highlighted the strengths and assets they bring, such as resilience, community support networks, and a strong motivation to succeed academically despite systemic challenges.

This assessment allowed us to tailor the Rise Up Wellness program to address their specific needs, ensuring that the resources and strategies offered were culturally and contextually appropriate. Additionally, this needs assessment provides rationale for funding that can be utilized in the future when looking to secure funding to expand the program. By conducting this needs assessment, I demonstrated the ability to evaluate population needs and capacities, ensuring that the wellness program was both inclusive and impactful.

- **Competency #9: Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention**

The syllabus for the Rise Up Wellness program was designed to serve as a structured intervention aimed at addressing the wellness needs of business students. By framing wellness behaviors as essential professional skills, the syllabus directly addresses the health challenges that can affect both academic performance and long-term professional success.

This intervention focuses on educating students on a variety of health topics, including mental and physical well-being, stress management, nutrition, and the importance of physical activity. The syllabus lays out a systematic approach, with alternating practical applications (group exercises, nutrition seminars, self-defense classes) and lecture-based sessions on health concepts. Each topic was carefully selected based on the needs assessment, which identified key areas where students required support to overcome health disparities and barriers to academic success.

By using a population-based approach that addresses the needs of marginalized students, the syllabus promotes equitable access to wellness education and resources. It ensures that all students, regardless of background, have the opportunity to build the knowledge and skills necessary for personal and professional growth.

- **Competency #13: Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes**

The director checklist was designed to ensure that the next Wellness Director can successfully deliver the program based on a semester-by-semester basis and provides additional details that are critical to the functioning of the program. One of the critical components of the checklist is providing clear instructions on how to establish and continue collaborative relationships for resources that are essential to the success of the Rise Up Wellness program.

For example, the checklist guides the new director on maintaining the partnership with the student recreation center, which provides access to facilities for exercise sessions, self-defense classes, fitness assessments, and personal training staff who assists in sessions. This partnership is vital for offering students hands-on opportunities to engage in physical activity and learn valuable skills in a supportive environment while providing the personal training staff an opportunity to gain experience with this specific demographic and larger group size.

Additionally, the checklist emphasizes the relationship with the multicultural student center which grants access to their kitchen for nutrition seminars, further enhancing the learning experience for students. The checklist also includes strategies for collaborating with the dietetics department, whose graduate students assist in the nutrition seminars, bringing specialized expertise to the program.

These partnerships with key stakeholders—student recreation center, multicultural student center, and dietetics department—illustrate how coalition-building and relationship management are essential for sustaining and enhancing the program. Through these collaborations, the director ensures that the program follows the structure of the syllabus and students have access to the necessary resources and expertise to improve their overall wellness.

- **Competency #11: Select methods to evaluate public health programs**

The evaluation plan for the Rise Up Wellness program utilizes a multi-faceted approach to assess both student outcomes and the performance of the program director. The evaluation focuses on key areas that align with appropriate methods for evaluating public health programs.

First, the evaluation measures student participation and engagement by collecting data on how many students attend each session and their level of involvement. This is critical for understanding whether the program effectively reaches its target audience. Additionally, feedback on student enjoyment is gathered to assess how well the sessions are received and to identify areas where improvements in content delivery or session structure may be needed. Another key aspect is measuring the skills and knowledge gained by students post-sessions, which provides insight into the program's effectiveness in meeting its educational goals and promoting lasting behavioral changes.

The evaluation also includes a performance assessment of the program director, focusing on their ability to deliver program content effectively, maintain organization, and ensure that the program runs on schedule. This feedback helps ensure that the leadership is capable of managing the program efficiently. Furthermore, the evaluation considers the director's capacity to maintain and build upon the existing partnerships with the student recreation center, multicultural student center, and dietetics department, which are essential for the continued success and expansion of the program. By incorporating these metrics—spanning both student outcomes and director performance—the evaluation provides a comprehensive understanding of the program's impact.

- **Competency #19: Communicate audience-appropriate (i.e., non-academic, non-peer audience) public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation**

The flyers designed to promote the wellness seminars were created with the primary goal of reaching the diverse group of College of Business students, many of whom may not have a strong background in health or wellness. To effectively engage this audience, the flyers were written in clear, accessible language that emphasized the practical benefits of attending the seminars. For instance, the messaging focused on how the seminars could help students improve their academic performance, manage stress, and adopt healthier lifestyles—topics that are highly relevant to their daily lives.

Visually, the flyers were crafted to be appealing and attention-grabbing, using simple, bold graphics and concise text to quickly convey the key information. This ensured that students, even in passing, could easily grasp the essential details of the event, such as the time, location, and purpose of the seminar. By avoiding overly technical language or academic jargon, the flyers were designed to resonate with an audience lacking formal health education, making health information more approachable and relevant to students.

These marketing efforts also tied into oral presentations that accompanied seminars during the semester such as the welcome back seminar and group coaching sessions. During these presentations, the same audience-appropriate communication strategies were employed, ensuring that students felt comfortable engaging with the content and asking questions. Through these materials and presentations, the program effectively communicated important public health messages in a manner that was tailored to the audience's needs and comprehension level.

Table 5.1 Summary of MPH Foundational Competencies

Number and Competency		Description
18	Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors	Job description which conveyed to both students and faculty the duties of the job and qualification needed of the applicant.
7	Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities' health	Needs assessment which determined the specific needs of the Rise Up students and connected them to build the foundation of the program.
9	Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention	The course syllabus was designed to serve as a structured intervention aimed at addressing the wellness needs of business students.
13	Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes	The director checklist outlines the key components that allow for fluid delivery of the program and provides strategies to maintain and develop new relationships to support the program with access to resources to enhance program delivery.
11	Select methods to evaluate public health programs	The evaluation plan for the Rise Up Wellness program utilizes a multi-faceted approach to assess both student outcomes and the performance of the program director.
19	Communicate audience-appropriate (i.e., non-academic, non-peer audience) public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation	Marketing materials were created, enhancing skills in PowerPoint and Canva which provided opportunity to create health promotions for a diverse audience.

Table 5.2 MPH Foundational Competencies and Course Taught In

22 Public Health Foundational Competencies Course Mapping	MPH 701	MPH 720	MPH 754	MPH 802	MPH 818
Evidence-based Approaches to Public Health					
1. Apply epidemiological methods to the breadth of settings and situations in public health practice	x		x		
2. Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context	x	x	x		
3. Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming and software, as appropriate	x	x	x		
4. Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy or practice	x		x		
Public Health and Health Care Systems					

22 Public Health Foundational Competencies Course Mapping	MPH 701	MPH 720	MPH 754	MPH 802	MPH 818
5. Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings		x			
6. Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities and racism undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and societal levels					x
Planning and Management to Promote Health					
7. Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities' health		x		x	
8. Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation of public health policies or programs					x
9. Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention			x		
10. Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management		x	x		
11. Select methods to evaluate public health programs	x	x	x		
Policy in Public Health					
12. Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence		x	x	x	
13. Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes		x		x	
14. Advocate for political, social or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations		x			x
15. Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity		x		x	
Leadership					
16. Apply principles of leadership, governance and management, which include creating a vision, empowering others, fostering collaboration and guiding decision making		x			x
17. Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges		x			
Communication					
18. Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors	DMP 815, FNDH 880 or KIN 796				
19. Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation	DMP 815, FNDH 880 or KIN 796				
20. Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content		x			x
Interprofessional Practice					
21. Perform effectively on interprofessional teams		x			x
Systems Thinking					
22. Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue			x	x	

Student Attainment of MPH Emphasis Area Competencies (Physical Activity)

Throughout my Applied Practical Experience (APE), I addressed the competencies related to my emphasis on Physical Activity by applying the knowledge and skills gained from coursework to the development of the Rise Up Wellness program. Here's how each competency was attained and utilized during this culminating experience:

- **Population Health**

The competency to investigate the impact of physical activity on population health and disease outcomes was covered in KIN 612, where I learned about the relationship between the built environment, policy, and physical activity. The course highlighted how access to physical activity resources and awareness programs can improve health outcomes at the population level. I integrated these concepts into the Rise Up Wellness program by designing interventions that increased access to fitness resources and educational sessions, aiming to establish a supportive environment that encouraged consistent participation in physical activity. The program targeted promoting health behaviors that would prevent disease and enhance their long-term well-being.

- **Social, Behavioral, and Environmental Influences**

This competency involved investigating the factors that contribute to physical activity participation, which I covered in KIN 610 and KIN 805. KIN 610 provided foundational skills for conducting needs assessments, program design, and evaluation. These skills were essential for creating the products used in the Rise Up Wellness program, such as the needs assessment and evaluation plan. KIN 805 deepened my understanding of behavior change and the importance of using theories to guide program development. This course emphasized that theory-based interventions are more likely to be effective and sustainable, which informed my approach to designing the practical and informational sessions. I considered social influences, such as peer support and community, and environmental factors, like access to exercise facilities, to address barriers to participation.

- **Theory Application**

The application of social and behavioral theories in physical activity programming was covered in both KIN 610 and KIN 805. These courses equipped me with the tools to select and apply theories and frameworks, such as SCT and SDT, when developing interventions. SCT helped guide the creation of strategies that enhanced students' self-efficacy through goal-setting and progress tracking. SDT informed the program's approach to promoting autonomy by allowing students to choose from various wellness sessions while fostering relatedness through group activities. By using theory-based interventions, I ensured that the program was grounded in evidence-based practices that are known to support long-term adherence to physical activity.

- **Developing and Evaluating Physical Activity Interventions**

This competency was addressed through KIN 612 and KIN 805, which provided insight into creating and assessing physical activity interventions in different settings. For the Rise Up Wellness program, I developed interventions that included practical sessions (e.g., group exercises, self-defense classes) and informational seminars (e.g., nutrition education, stress management). The content was tailored to meet the needs of business students, considering the social, behavioral, and environmental factors identified through the needs assessment. Evaluating the program involves measuring student participation, feedback, and changes in knowledge or behavior, which is essential for understanding the program's effectiveness and guiding future improvements.

- **Support Evidence-Based Practice**

The competency of supporting evidence-based strategies to promote physical activity was reinforced through KIN 612 and my extensive practical experience as a personal trainer. My nine years in the fitness industry involved staying current with emerging research and integrating evidence-based practices into training programs. During my APE, I applied this knowledge to design strategies that encouraged physical activity among students. I used clear communication to convey the benefits of the wellness program to stakeholders, including students, faculty, and program partners. Networking

and collaboration were also vital for securing resources and building partnerships that supported the program's goals.

By integrating the competencies learned through my coursework with practical experiences, I was able to create a wellness program that was not only theoretically sound but also practically relevant to the needs of the target population. This experience reinforced the value of applying evidence-based principles in public health practice and highlighted the importance of addressing physical activity from multiple perspectives to achieve sustainable health outcomes.

Table 5.3 Summary of MPH Emphasis Area Competencies

MPH Emphasis Area:		
Number and Competency		Description
1	Population Health	Investigate the impact of physical activity on population health and disease outcomes. KIN 612
2	Social, behavioral and environmental influences	Investigate social, behavioral and environmental factors that contribute to participation in physical activity KIN 610 and KIN 805
3	Theory application	Examine and select social and behavioral theories and frameworks for physical activity programs in community settings KIN 610 and KIN 805
4	Developing and evaluating physical activities interventions	Develop and evaluate physical activity interventions in diverse community settings. KIN 610 and KIN 805
5	Support evidence-based practice	Create evidence-based strategies to promote physical activity and communicate them to community stakeholders. KIN 612

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