Wellness Grant Feature of the Month: Development and Alumni Relations
Ambassadors: Mary McCormack and Angela Nubla

The Development and Alumni Relations Department used the Mini-Grant funds used for purchasing exercise equipment such as Mesh equipment bags, Mini exercise balls, Yoga mats, Yoga blocks, Muscle rollers, and an ottoman bench store all of these supplies in. Additionally, they purchased fruit and refreshments for the program’s kick-off.

The main goals were to promote a culture of health and wellness within University Development, start a small sized program, and continue to build it slowly. They initiated this by sending monthly wellness newsletters to staff in their building, and by providing up to 3 yoga sessions a month over the lunch hour in one of their department’s conference rooms. The staff that received the newsletters and classes opted in by subscribing to a distribution list, which helped keep track of participation and interests of colleagues. Due to the size limitation of their conference room, they chose to start on a smaller scale with this program and build it over the year.

Health and Well-being was promoted throughout the planning of the event and through the sessions as well. By sending 1 -2 communications a month through their distribution list to promote health and well-being, as well as by sharing news of this program in person to staff, they were able to get the word out and encourage coworkers to participate. Before receiving the mini-grant, they also received a generous donation of 200 stretch bands from Kaiser, and have used these as a conversation starter for this program. The attendance rates for yoga sessions were in between 9-15 participants. They have about 25 staff members who wanted to get involved, and roughly 15 staff attend the sessions bi-weekly.

The Wellness Ambassadors said “we receive great feedback frequently! Staff explain that it is wonderful to get a mid-day break with our yoga classes, and appreciate the culture we are creating. We have received comments that this is “relaxing” “energizing” and “fun!”.”

Additional notable feedback is that staff in the department desire sessions more frequently. Unfortunately, this request cannot be met at this time as the program is still in the initial stages. However, in response to the requests, the motivated wellness ambassadors are exploring options of onboarding more wellness ambassadors to help them grow!

Some of the challenges they faced included lack of time and volunteers to offer to set up more classes. It was difficult to not have access to a corporate card to make wellness purchases, as the reimbursements and payment of materials took quite some effort.

They noticed that one of the worst habits that staff have in their office is eating lunch at their desks, and not taking a break to stand up and walk around. Because of this program, one positive outcome was that staff members began encouraging each other to get up, stretch, and relax during yoga sessions. Many colleagues have mentioned that they’ve felt re-energized after the sessions too. The wellness ambassadors also promoted the UC Walk in our department, and many people enjoyed the event. They are excited about what else our program has to offer them, and are very much likely to participate again. As the program was started last year, and proved to be a success, the department want to continue the program and build it more this upcoming year!