Wellness Ambassador of the Month
Kayla Koenigshof – Student Housing

How long have you worked at UC Davis?
I just recently hit my 3-year mark as a staff member here.

What does wellness mean to you?
Wellness is comprised of the components that add to your overall experience of being in your body and around others. I like to think that you can assess your wellness through various questions. Can your body do the things you want to do? Does your body feel good? Do you feel a sense of belonging in your community? Do you have people you share experiences with and get support from? Do you feel comfortable experiencing and processing all of life’s emotions?

Why did you become a wellness ambassador?
Within my 1st year as a staff member, I started a walking competition for my department, which really took off. Shortly after, I learned about our wellness committee, so I got involved. Around that same time, our former wellness ambassador was experiencing an increasing work load and was seeking someone to take over the role. I took the opportunity because I had such an interest in promoting health and wellness, and wanted to connect my colleagues to valuable resources.

How long have you been a wellness ambassador?
It’s been about 1.5 to 2 years.

What has been rewarding or positive about your experience thus far?
Seeing programs, like the walking competition, grow and create a sense of comradery has been so rewarding. The competition is now held biannually and, in the past, has involved over 70 participants. It creates a fun and healthy spirit of competition, and encourages daily movement.

What are some of the challenges you face as a wellness ambassador?
Absorbing all of the resources that are offered by the university can be challenging. There are so many diverse events and resources – parsing through them and figuring out what my colleagues may want to hear is a challenge. I strive to bring the most well-tailored resources to my colleagues, so that people are aware of what the university is offering to meet their diverse needs.

What is one piece of advice you would like to share with new wellness ambassadors?
Build a committee or interest groups you can work with and have them be representative of different populations and interests within your departments. Empower people to work within their skill sets to put together events and share resources. In our department, one of our staff members is a yoga instructor who holds free lunch time yoga sessions. It has been such a joy to see how colleagues can use their skills
and passions to get others involved in new activities, and it helps to expand wellness opportunities within the department.

Staff and Faculty Health and Well-being aims to build an environment that makes the healthier choice the easier choice, while providing staff and faculty with the required support to make UC Davis the healthiest community. How do you feel you have contributed to our mission?

I think as someone on the frontlines, hearing about all of our university’s resources, I’ve been able to contribute to this mission by being continually attentive to the needs within my department and communicating resources appropriately. Additionally, with the help of my colleagues, we’ve been able to make our department one where the healthy choice is the easier choice by instilling those values within the office. This isn’t just having a salad option at a staff lunch, but going beyond that to create an environment where people feel connected and supported to make the healthy changes they want to incorporate into their lives.

What is your favorite thing to do in your spare time?

Cooking! I love to eat well, and cooking is a fun and creative way for me to explore that.