Using Mobile Applications to Better Estimate College Students’ Physical Fitness Trends

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Throughout the Spring of 2011, this special project, under the direction of the University of Florida’s Department of RecSports, investigated the topic of expanding access to fitness information through a social medium. The goal of this project was to assess basic usage trends of current Group Fitness users within the university, establish a better understanding of their attitudes towards a potential online service, and from there propose recommendations which decide the next step in whether/how to engage students through such a medium.

A six question survey was assembled to engage students who were waiting in-line for a Group Fitness class at one of RecSports’ two recreational centers. Approximately 10% of classes were surveyed to illustrate a better estimation into how student’s utilized Group Fitness, and how might introducing a mobile application aimed at informing them with live updates from these classes affect their usage.

Based upon these results, three recommendations, graded against criteria which were found to be important to key stakeholders and Group Fitness instructors, were created. Since the mobile application has not been created, and one of the purposes of this project is to assess the possible uses for the mobile application, the recommendations are suggested courses of action for RecSports rather than actual technological feature recommendations.

The implications from this project illustrate that conceptualization and testing of a mobile application described within this report would be of use to Group Fitness users, instructors, and management.

To the greater field of public health, this report explores a path of using emerging social trends to potentially create new health data for research. If such a mobile application were created and implemented, data on a number of issues would be available for research; demographics of group fitness classes, usage patterns, and much more could be gathered on any geographic area which utilized the service.