

University of British Columbia

Social Ecological Economic Development Studies (SEEDS) Sustainability Program

Student Research Report

# Barriers and Facilitators to Student Participation at the UBC Aquatic Centre

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Prepared for:

Course Code: KIN 464

University of British Columbia

Date: 12 April 2022

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# **Barriers and Facilitators to Student Participation at the UBC**

## **Aquatic Centre**

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Presented to: Dr. Negin Riazi

Course Code: KIN 464

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## Executive Summary

This study's purpose is to create and improve inclusivity and participation with the University of British Columbia Aquatics Centre located on the Vancouver campus, by discovering the perceived barriers and facilitators students experience. By using an online survey, we identify student participation levels within the Vancouver Aquatics Centre, barriers to students that hinder participation, as well as facilitators that encourage the activity levels within the Aquatics Centre. The survey consisted of 13 questions in a clear and easy to read format and was distributed to students with hand sanitizers given out as incentives for completion of the survey. The goal of this study is to foster wellbeing within students as well as provide inclusive campus facilities that will ultimately generate resilient communities within undergraduate students. By removing barriers, we hope to instill active lifelong practices for students as well as create opportunities for friendships to foster leading to a stronger network as well as improving the UBC campus. Analysis of the data was conducted by the researchers and appropriate recommendations were made to address the main perceived barriers. The three largest barriers to students is the: lack of awareness of programs and offerings at the Aquatics Centre, this includes knowledge of accessing and registering for programs, the second barrier identified it the inadequate registration times, and the third barrier was the prices for attending programs other than a drop in swim. Our recommendations for removing these perceived barriers are create an easily accessible and distributable marketing campaign on the Aquatics Centre and their services, adjust registration times to be compatible with class schedules, and offer a greater discount on classes students are interested in rather than classes associated with older individuals like aquafit.

## Introduction

An active community is an essential aspect to the health and wellbeing of individuals. Often sport and other recreational activities offer an outlet to relieve stress while combating a sedentary lifestyle. Not only does recreation and sport offer physical health benefits, but it is also a great way to feel a sense of belonging, and fosters opportunities to make friends and meet new individuals which can help the overall wellness of every individual involved (Henchy, 2013). The UBC Aquatics Centre located on the Vancouver campus is a new top of the line facility that offers a wide range of classes/clubs and facilities. The variety of aquatic services available to UBC students are offered at a discounted rate as well as free of cost access to certain programs, yet there are barriers for students' access and participation within this organization. Even with the UBC Aquatics Centre being one of the few free facilities offered to students, there is little understanding or awareness of participation levels among UBC students. The overall focus of this study is to recognize and identify these barriers and facilitators in order to provide recommendations to increase the participation rate and student access to the UBC Aquatic Centre. But in order to provide effective changes a comprehensive understanding of the barriers and facilitators is essential to ensure a long-lasting impact.

There are many benefits to regular exercise and physical activity for everyone, but with students' activity levels at an all-time low, many struggle to achieve the benefits of physical activity. Dejonge et al. (2021) highlights that post-secondary students view physical activity as a self-care strategy to reduce stress. A Canadian National survey indicated that 52% of students claim to have felt depressed and found it challenging to function (DeJonge et al., 2021). Evidently, mental health illnesses pose a barrier to physical activity in post-secondary students, but it is unknown if this barrier is affecting UBC students. Dejonge et al. (2021) suggests that

physical activity should be tailored to the individuals' needs and goals. Considering individual physical activity priorities and preferences are essential to increase physical activity behaviours, and motivation for regular engagement (DeJonge et al., 2021). With post-secondary student time constraints currently, "only 9.9% of post-secondary students (females 10.4%; males 9.2%) were currently achieving [the] four components of the 24-hour movement guideline" (Weatherson, 2021). Although the 24-hour movement guideline includes a sleeping component as well as sedentary and screen time, it was reported that the students most commonly adhered to the moderate to vigorous physical activity guideline with 61% while sleeping guidelines were adhered to 59.7% (Weatherson, 2021). These guidelines aim to create a healthier society through proper work life balance, but others have critiqued these guidelines as unattainable within modern society. Caproni (2004) suggests that work-life balance is an unattainable ideal that sets people up for frustration and failure if they never achieve it, possibly furthering mental health issues among students which poses a question of whether students even want to use the swimming facilities on campus. But for those who do, creating an inclusive environment and infrastructure can be a critical aspect to furthering their participation, hence governments and institutions invest in public infrastructure to improve the overall welfare and productivity of a population (National Research Council, 1995). Investing into recreation facilities provides opportunities for community wellbeing, which helps reduce costs in health care, justice, and social services (Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, 2015). Additionally, implementing cost-effective physical activity programs within a university community can help increase physical activity participation, and help limit barriers such as mental health concerns (DeJonge et al., 2021).

As of now there is little information available on the usage levels of the Aquatics Centre as well as the registrations statistics of UBC students on program offerings. Any information found on post-secondary students' mental and physical health often encompasses a large group of institutions rather than a focus on UBC Vancouver campus students. Little to no information on students' knowledge and perception of the UBC Aquatics Centre is available to the researcher. Not only is the perception and knowledge missing there is also currently a lack of information on the students preferred program offerings. All of this is crucial information in order to understand students' current participation as well as create appropriate recommendations in order to improve access and participation among UBC undergraduate students.

#### Methods and participants:

The survey consisted of multiple questions in a clear and easy to read format and was distributed to students with incentives for completion of the survey. The incentive distributed was a small bottle of hand sanitizer. We will be giving the same questions to the constituents (current users) and non-constituents (UBC undergraduate students who are not currently engaged).

- The formulation of the survey consisted of creating non-invasive questions that will be able to categorize the participants on location and usage levels of the UBC Aquatics Centre. The survey was then created on the site Qualtrics which included a consent form and then was distributed using two recruitment methods (word of mouth and a classroom announcement post given to professors to distribute among UBC undergraduate students). This survey tool was chosen as it has been approved for use by UBC and complies with the BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (Riazi, February 24 2022).

- Participants were asked to fill out the survey as truthfully as possible to try and avoid potential response bias.
- Data collection period will be open for two weeks, March 18th 2022- April 1st 2022, and was closed 5 days before the deadline. The maximum number of participants was not reached, if the maximum number of participants was reached the survey would be closed to allow for sorting and analysis conducted by the researchers.
- Data was sorted into groups by the survey site. Once the data is sorted into the designated groups, it was further analyzed on the current participation levels and the most prevalent barriers on their activity level. Further analysis will also occur on the overall awareness of the Aquatics Centre and program offerings available to students as we suspect there is little awareness of the program offerings. Analysis will also involve discovery of student undergraduate programs and their current activity levels.
- Once sortment and analysis is completed the researchers provided the appropriate recommendations to help increase student participation levels.

## Results

It was found that our 40 participants (21 identified as male, 19 identified as female) ranged from a variety of years and different educational streams. All participants were recruited on the UBC Vancouver campus while specifically targeting undergraduate students. Figure 1 provides an in-depth analysis of your participants' year of education.

#	Year of program	%	Count
1	Year 1	20.00%	8

2	Year 2	0.00%	0
3	Year 3	25.00%	10
4	Year 4	40.00%	16
5	Year 5 +	15.00%	6
	Total	100%	40

Figure 1: Participants current academic year

For our participants figure 2 shows 26 participants (65%) were meeting or exceeding the 24-hour fitness guidelines, 10 participants (25%) were only meeting 1 hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity and 4 participants (10%) were completing less than 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week. Although the majority of our participants are remaining physically active, 28 participants (70%) have not used the Aquatics Centre located on the Vancouver campus while only 12 participants (30%) have used the Aquatic Centre. When asked if the participants are aware of the cost of any programs or offerings the majority of the participants are unfamiliar with the prices. Only 10% of the participants (4) were aware of the cost and price while 67.50% (27) have stated that they are completely unaware of the associated cost. The remaining 22.50% (9) of participants have stated that they have been told before but are no longer aware or familiar with the associated costs of the facility.

#	Are you currently aware of the cost associated with the Aquatics centre and their program offerings?	%	Count
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1	Yes	10.00%	4
2	No	67.50%	27
3	I have heard about it, but not really sure	22.50%	9
	Total	100%	40

Figure 2: Student awareness of costs associated with the UBC aquatic centre

When participants were asked to identify reasons as to why they are currently not using the Aquatics Centre, the largest barrier that hinders UBC students participation was a lack of time for recreational activities with 30.77% of the participants agreeing. The second largest barrier identified is an overall dislike of swimming with 28.21% of participants agreeing. Distance from the participants home and not knowing how to access programs both had 10.26% of participants agreeing or identifying this as an issue. The remaining 20.51% of participants selected others as the barrier to their participation, the participants chose not to identify or elaborate what the other barrier was.

#	If you have not used the Aquatic Centre or are currently not using the Aquatic Centre please state why?	%	Count
1	Not having enough time	30.77%	12
2	Do not like swimming	28.21%	11
3	It is too far from where I live	10.26%	4

4	I don't know how to get started	10.26%	4
5	other	20.51%	8
	Total	100%	39

Figure 3: Participants' identified barriers on usage of the UBC Aquatic Centre

The participants also were asked to identify facilitators that would promote and increase their participation, four main facilitators were identified. Participants were allowed to state multiple facilitators. Twenty seven (43.55%) of participants identified an improvement of access to programs for students which included improvement in awareness of programs and registration among students. Thirteen (20.97%) of participants suggested improving and increasing registration times while twelve (19.35%) participants suggested making adult programs cheaper to attend for UBC students. Six (9.68%) of the participants identified that they are content with the current offerings at the Aquatic centre and do not have any recommendations or suggestions while four (6.45%) selected 'other'. Participants who selected 'other' were required to identify the facilitator but all four of the participants have agreed and stated that their dislike of swimming will prevent them from participating.

#	What are some ways we can increase your participation at the UBC Aquatics Centre?	%	Count
4	Improve access to programs for student (create awareness of programs/events at the aquatics centre)	43.55%	27
5	Improve/increase registration times	20.97%	13

6	Make it cheaper to attend	19.35%	12
7	I like it the way it is	9.68%	6
8	Other	6.45%	4
	Total	100%	62

Figure 4: Participants identified facilitators on usage of the UBC Aquatics Centre

## Discussion

Our goal was to address the perceived stated barriers and provide proper recommendations to the UBC Aquatics Centre. The survey found that there was a relatively even representation of both male and female representation. However, the sample population of our participants lacked non-binary identifying students as well as second year students. Our data identified that the majority of the participants were meeting the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines. Although the majority of the participants in this study remain physically active, it was found that a large portion of those participants have not used the aquatics centre located on the Vancouver campus. When it comes to the cost for student participation at the aquatic centre, only a handful of participants stated that they were aware of the cost for students, while the majority stated that they were completely unaware of the cost for student participation. Although the UBC aquatic centre offers select programs at a discounted rate, students are seemingly unaware of the offerings. The survey also identified the 4 main barriers to student participation: 1) not having enough time for recreational activities, 2) dislike of swimming, 3) distance from the participants' homes, and 4) not knowing how to get started.

Time constraints was a hypothesised barrier to students' participation, and along with Caproni (2004) suggesting that work-life balance is an unattainable ideal, students may be overworked and pressed for time leading their participation in positive health practices to be hindered. These identified time constraints can lead to further mental health concerns as suggested by DeJonge et al (2021) that nearly 52% of students claim to feel some form of depression. The second largest identified barrier pertains to the sample population's dislike of swimming, as identified by DeJonge et al (2021), proper self-care and exercise needs to be tailored to the individual in regards to their needs and likes. In order to properly address this barrier, the aquatic centre will need to tailor their program offerings to undergraduate students and create strategies to promote the physical, mental, and social benefits of swimming while reassuring individuals about the safety protocols at the UBC Aquatic Centre. By doing so, it may ease any worries, and concerns that students have regarding their dislike for swimming.

Although this may not address the barrier for all of the participants, it may improve participation for some. One unexpected barrier that was identified is the distance of the participants' residence from the Vancouver campus aquatic centre. Although 25% of the participants stated that they live on campus, the remaining 75% of participants identified as commuter students. Henchy (2013) expresses that different housing arrangements affect student participation levels when using recreation facilities on campus. Therefore, students who live on campus are more likely to use the recreation facilities on-campus (Henchy, 2013). This distance could be a contributing factor to the identified time constraints of undergraduate students as well as a reflection of accessibility to proper storage of equipment for students with electronics who may have to carry around their equipment all day long, especially during rainy weather. Additionally, traffic may increase commuting time to and from campus, highlighting that transportation time on top of

academic load may be a key factor contributing to time constraints. Moreover, another barrier that was reported by participants was that they did not know how to get started at the UBC Vancouver Aquatic Centre, therefore addressing why they have not used the facility. Henchy (2013) highlights that increasing awareness between students and staff of campus recreation programs helps students integrate with the social components of university. Therefore, the results indicate that a lack of awareness around the discounted programs at the UBC Vancouver Aquatic Centre as well as difficulties navigating the website for obtaining relevant information about online registration can all be contributing factors that limit student participation.

This survey also identified students perceived facilitators and recommendations to aid in promoting and improving their participation. Students identified that improving access and awareness of the aquatic centre will be most beneficial in improving participation. As the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (2015) recommends investing into recreation facilities provides opportunities for community wellbeing, it is just as important to ensure the public is aware of these opportunities and how to access health benefiting opportunities. Chen et al (2017) also states that “different communication strategies may be needed to effectively reach different demographic groups”. Improvement of registration times was also identified and recommended by the participants; this includes the time allowed for individuals to register for classes as well as the current allocated swimming times that have been instilled for health reasons. Participants have also identified lowering the cost of participation for students. This information pertains to adult lesson classes as currently offered discounted programs. These programs could possibly be unappealing to the participants further supporting DeJonge et al (2021).

## Limitations

One of our largest limitations within this research study was the sample size. We reached the minimum number of required participants (40 participants). Due to our smaller sample size, an inadequate representation of undergraduate UBC students may have been present throughout our study. Another limitation to our research could possibly be the lack of diversity among the participants in ethnicity and education. Although it was not identified, it is possible that most of our survey responses came from kinesiology students at UBC Vancouver. This may have skewed our results, particularly in meeting daily physical activity needs. Our sample also lacked second year students which may have also skewed any results or altered the diversity of the sample population. This sample size also affected how we were able or unable to identify any other barriers related to socioeconomic factors like race, gender, and how those would affect participation at the aquatic centre. Specifically, recreation facilities tend to be located in higher socioeconomic areas, therefore a diverse and larger sample size is needed to evaluate different socioeconomic factors. Our small sample size also made it difficult to identify other barriers to student participation, as well as making more recommendations. One final limitation that we identified is a possible response bias that the participants may have had. Even though the survey was anonymous, participants may have selected answers that best fit their perception of them instead of an accurate representation of them and their true behaviours.

## Recommendations

The goal of this study is to identify barriers and facilitators that affect student participation within the UBC Vancouver campus Aquatics Centre. Data on perceived barriers and facilitators were collected with an online survey distributed to undergraduate UBC (University of British Columbia) students. The survey was distributed on the Qualtrics website to

UBC students for a two-week period of data collection and resulted in 46 responses. Data collected from the online survey done by undergraduate students at UBC were then assessed and analyzed. As a result, 4 key barriers to student participation were identified: lack of access and awareness of available programs at the Aquatic Centre (43.55%), registration times and conflict issues (20.97%), financial barriers (19.35%), and other which later was identified as a dislike of swimming (6.45%). All of the perceived barriers to students' participation within the UBC Vancouver campus Aquatics Centre were discussed and recommendations were made based on the following findings. The largest identified barrier is the lack of access and awareness of programs and class offerings at the Aquatics Centre. It was identified that UBC students do not know how to find information on the Aquatic Centre or the available programs and offerings of the Aquatic Centre. The recommendation we made to address this perceived barrier is to improve access and raise awareness of the UBC Aquatic Centre and its available programs and classes. We propose that the Aquatic Centre launch a marketing campaign targeting UBC students and offering information on how to find and access available programs. An easily accessible and distributable marketing campaign on the Aquatics centre and their services should be created. Ideally each year in the fall semester the marketing campaign will be conducted to target new students. This marketing campaign can focus on targeting more participants by using social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter to distribute relevant information about drop-in swims, costs of programs, and general information regarding the hours of operation, location of the facility, and registration process for aquatic programs. For students who do not use or have access to social media, we propose that the UBC Aquatic Centre display infographics, and posters/flyers in different buildings across campus. By having visual representations of the UBC Aquatic Centre in various buildings, it may influence some students

to think about participating in swimming as a form of physical activity. Specifically, this will allow students to re-evaluate their own physical activity levels while attending classes in those various buildings. The second barrier identified is the inadequate registration times, this includes the time students are allowed to attend and register for programs and classes. The recommendation we made to address this perceived barrier is to adjust registration times to be compatible with class schedules. We suggest offering more registration times that align with the typical course schedule offering as well as offering earlier access to registration for students. The third barrier identified is the cost of registering. We found that although a drop-in swim is free other classes and program offerings are not. In addition, the Aquatic Centre claims to offer programs at a discounted rate for students, these rates still pose an issue and barrier to student participation. Therefore, the recommendation we made to address this perceived barrier is to offer a greater discount on classes or swim groups for students. We aim to increase student participation level and student access to the UBC Aquatic Centre with the above recommendations made.

## References

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## **Appendix 1: Consent Form**



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210-6081 University Boulevard  
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Phone 604 822 9192  
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www.kin.ubc.ca

### **CLASS PROJECT: Health Promotion and Physical Activity (KIN 464)**

#### **Participant Consent Form**

#### **Assessing Barriers to Student Participation at the UBC Aquatic Centre Group 15**

**Principal Investigator:**

Dr. Andrea Bundon (Assistant Professor, School of Kinesiology, Faculty of Education)

**Sessional Instructor:**

Dr. Negin Riazi (School of Kinesiology, Faculty of Education)

**The purpose of the class project:**

To gather knowledge and expertise from community members on the topic of barriers that affect student participation at the UBC Aquatic Centre.

**Study Procedures:**

With your permission, we are asking you to participate in an online survey. You may only complete the survey once.

**With the information gathered, students will critically examine how different individuals understand or engage in health promoting activities or health promotion initiatives.**

**Project outcomes:**

The information gathered will be part of a written report for the class project. The written report will be shared with campus partners involved with the project. Summaries of findings will also be posted on the following websites. *No personal information/information that could identify participants will be included in these reports or shared with campus partners.*

**UBC SEEDS Program Library:**

**<https://sustain.ubc.ca/courses-degrees/alternative-credit-options/seeds-sustainability-program/seeds-sustainability-library>**

**Potential benefits of class project:**

There are no explicit benefits to you by taking part in this class project. However, the survey will provide you with the opportunity to voice your opinion on your experiences with health promoting activities or initiatives in a broad sense and will provide the students with an opportunity to learn from your experiences.

**Confidentiality:**

Maintaining the confidentiality of the participants involved in the research is paramount, and no names of participants will be collected.

At the completion of the course, all data (i.e. notes) and signed consent forms will be stored on a secure electronic drive by Drs. Riazi and Bundon. All data and consent forms will be destroyed 1 year after completion of the course.

**Risks:**

The risks associated with participating in this research are minimal. There are no known physical, economic, or social risks associated with participation in this study. You should know that your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study and there will not be negative impacts related to your withdrawal. If you withdraw from the study, all of the information you have shared up until that point will be destroyed.

**Contact for information about the study:**

If you have any questions about this class project, you can contact Negin Riazi by email at [negin.riazi@ubc.ca](mailto:negin.riazi@ubc.ca).

**Research ethics complaints:**

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or e-mail [RSIL@ors.ubc.ca](mailto:RSIL@ors.ubc.ca) . or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

**Consent:**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. By clicking 'Next', you are consenting to participate in the study.

## **Appendix 2: Survey Link**

[https://ubc.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_1ljbBTv1w9gAEIM](https://ubc.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1ljbBTv1w9gAEIM)

## Appendix 3: Recruitment Materials



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### **Assessing barriers and facilitators to student participation at the UBC Aquatics Centre**

If you are interested in participating in any aquatic activities at the UBC Aquatics Centre, we would love to speak with you!

**As part of a course-based research project (KIN 464), we are conducting a study on barriers and facilitators that affect student participation at the UBC Aquatics Centre. If you are a UBC undergraduate student currently enrolled at the Vancouver campus (minimum of 1 class) and live in the lower mainland region, we would love to hear from you/for you to complete a survey. More information at [https://ubc.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_1IjbBTv1w9qAEIM](https://ubc.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1IjbBTv1w9qAEIM) or email [emmaliu1108@gmail.com](mailto:emmaliu1108@gmail.com).**

**Please note that this post is public and anyone who likes, comments or shares the link will, by doing so, be associated with the study. The Principal Investigator on this project is Dr. Andrea Bundon ([andrea.bundon@ubc.ca](mailto:andrea.bundon@ubc.ca)) and Dr. Negin Riazi ([negin.riazi@ubc.ca](mailto:negin.riazi@ubc.ca)) is the sessional instructor for the course.**