The School of Kinesiology & the President’s Initiative on Children, Youth and Families

Setting a Course for the Future: Developing Physically Active Children, Youth, Families and Communities

Transforming the University of Minnesota and the State of Minnesota through Collaborative Scholarship, Curriculum Delivery and Civic Engagement

Within the next decade, the University of Minnesota aspires to become one of the top three public research institutions in the world. The transformation required to achieve this goal will take the dedicated efforts of all members of the University community. In his Recommendations for Transforming the University, President Robert Bruininks realigned departments into stronger collegiate wholes. These integrated colleges present significant opportunities for a wide array of stakeholders, particularly with respect to interdisciplinary research. New academic structures and scientific partnerships will ensure greater leveraging of resources, produce more efficient delivery of services, and result in significant cost savings. Our historic mission will be strengthened by turning this great university into one of global distinction in the 21st century.

President’s Initiative on Children, Youth and Families

President Bruininks established the President’s Initiative on Children, Youth and Families (CYF Initiative) as an agenda around which the University is committed to focusing its efforts in scholarship and civic engagement. The University of Minnesota and specifically the College of Education and Human Development lead the way in applying our expertise and scholarship toward improving the lives of children, youth and families in our state. The restructured college has created an interdisciplinary intellectual community that collaborates on achieving the visions of this initiative, and provides a framework within which to meet its four major goals.

The Critical Role of the School of Kinesiology in Transforming the U of M

Kinesiology by definition means “the study of human movement.” The School of Kinesiology focuses on the biological, social, psychological, behavioral and physiological foundations of physical activity. Physically active lifestyles benefit children, youth, families and communities by enhancing physical, psychological and social development and wellness. Scholars within the School of Kinesiology are invested in exploring these diverse benefits of participation across a wide spectrum of physical activity settings, including both school-based settings, such as physical education, recess, and interscholastic sport, and out-of-school time leisure settings such as recreational opportunities, exercise programs, club and community sports, and outdoor adventure activities. Both biological health and mental wellness benefits are achieved via physically active lifestyles that reduce incidence of overweight and obesity, help people manage the mental health challenges of living in a stressful society, strengthen family and community connections, and improve overall life satisfaction.

Through our current research, curriculum, and civic engagement efforts the four major goals of the CYF Initiative are being achieved by the School of Kinesiology in collaboration with our on- and off-campus partners in the broad context of physical activity. These current efforts serve as the foundation for our vision for transforming the School of Kinesiology and our connections with children, youth and families into a 21st century model.

Creating a 21st Century Model of Physical Activity Participation among Children, Youth and Families

In line with the following four major goals of the President’s CYF Initiative, these specific examples illustrate how School of Kinesiology faculty is creating an innovative, interdisciplinary, and international model for the future of the University:

- Enhance awareness of challenges, needs and opportunities of children, youth and families.

The role of parks, sport facilities and the outdoors in people’s lives are illustrated not only in the leisure amenities, but also in their provision of measurable health benefits, ranging from supplying direct contact with nature and a cleaner environment to offering opportunities for physical activity and social interaction. Applied research and outreach efforts in youth sport, urban recreation, adventure education and physical activity serve the CYF Initiative, particularly in the areas of...
The School of Kinesiology: Improving the physically active lives of children, youth and families through...

Interdisciplinary research on such diverse topics as:

- Adventure education and therapy for youth seeking alternative treatment options
- Role of urban parks and recreation in positive youth development
- Tools for monitoring movement skill in infants and young children with disabilities
- Athlete, coach and parent education in youth sport contexts
- Physical activity and physiological health in physical education students

Curriculum delivery of academic programs such as:

- Physical Education teaching licensure and healthy living across the lifespan
- Developmental and Adapted Physical Education teaching licensure
- Developmental sport psychology and competitive sport for children and youth
- Positive youth development through recreation and leisure
- Coaching licensure and sport-specific certifications

Civic Engagement with a variety of community organizations and civic partners such as:

- Youth development through recreation training workshops with the State of Minnesota Commission on Out of School Time, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, U of M Extension Center for 4-H/Youth Development
- Parents and Coaches Together (PACT) program with Minnesota Youth Soccer Association
- Physical Education field experience emphasizing working within diverse communities
- Best practices resource manual on developmental and adapted physical education being used across the United States in both academic and practitioner settings
- Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare Research Cooperative and social and emotional learning programs in outdoor education centers and schools