

Tuscaloosa sees an increase in fitness studios and student-led wellness organizations
TUSCALOOSA, Ala.-- Whether it's seeing groups of runners pass through The Strip, students with yoga mats in hand, RiverWalk crowds or protein shake drinkers, fitness and wellness connoisseurs are all around The University of Alabama's campus.

The doors of the UA recreation center see less and less activity as the year goes on, with more membership-based fitness centers opening up around campus.

Young adults, especially students, often search for the next trend that will lead them to their ideal body and mindset. This leads to Tuscaloosa being a hotspot for more fitness places to open up.

Within a twenty-mile radius of campus, there is Hotworx, Bash Reformer Pilates, True40, Move4, BodyBar Pilates and many more.

Sophomore UA student, Laura Grace Stafford, came into the year looking for a pilates gym after hearing good things about reformer machines.

After joining Bash Reformer Pilates for a semester she saw flaws in the classes she was taking with only slight progress.

"The class was not teaching me how to use the machines correctly which led to some minor injuries," Laura Grace said. "I decided to make the switch to Hotworx to get a more guided workout and also to reap more benefits like a sauna and infrared light for a better price."

Many students have similar thoughts about finding the right place to stay active, with the most frequently chosen place for students seeming to be Hotworx.

This could be due to Hotworx being open all hours of the day and providing as quick as fifteen minute sauna workouts for busy students in need of a quick burn.

Mary Alice Lane solely used UA's Rec Center before hearing about Hotworx. She explored many different places, often using her friends' guest passes to test out classes for free.

“Now that I’ve settled on getting a membership at Hotworx,” Mary Alice said, “I will never go to a different fitness studio.”

Many places will also train students to hire and lead their own classes, such as Three 15 Cycle and Barre and True40.

True40 has cardio-based classes, often fusing together pilates, yoga and strength training styles. Three 15 offers memberships as well as class packs for their cycling, strength and barre classes.

Senior Gracie Pitts has been working at Three 15 for two years now.

“I’ve always been an avid cycle class attendee,” Pitts said, “and Three 15 made the training and hiring process super easy.”

Pitts is also a member of Kappa Delta, committees within Kappa Delta and many other school clubs and organizations.

“I was able to have a flexible work schedule to accommodate for my school commitments while also earning money doing something I already loved to do,” Pitts said. “Everything I needed or wanted to get done on a day-to-day basis is all wrapped into one job.”

Along with the upsurge of fitness places around campus, many school organizations have been established with the intention of giving students a fitness-based community.

Run Girl Club is a girls-only community encouraging students to join in on multiple-mile runs, no matter what their personal pace is. Run Girl Club Tuscaloosa is sponsored by Fleet Feet Tuscaloosa.

Despite being recently established in Tuscaloosa, Run Girl Club has amassed over 600 members. Other locations include cities in Mississippi, Texas, Tennessee and South Carolina.

UA junior Findley Frazier loves to use Run Girl Club as “a fun way to get my steps in with my friends and meet new people who like to keep the same slow pace as me.”

Run Girl Club often collaborates with local businesses, is free to join and gives free treats to members during the runs such as Poppi drinks.

Run Girl Club also speaks at Panhellenic sorority houses to encourage movement for all and to enlist members to join their runs.

Started by UA Seniors Maya Sagen and Paris Lemons, The Wellness Society is also a heavily backed fitness club started from their inspiration to start a movement to help others find balance in their college lives through self-care and holistic well-being.

The Wellness Society started here at The University of Alabama but has now grown to have a national wellness community with over forty college and city chapters across the U.S.

Members of The Wellness Society pay a small fee depending on location to gain access to private events at fitness studios, discounted memberships, exclusive merch, networking events and more.

The Wellness Society’s main mission is to shape a movement that values well-being while building meaningful connections across the country.

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