

Stockton to Offer Degree in Exercise Science Beginning in Fall 2016; Field Has High Job Demand

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Galloway, NJ - Stockton University's School of Health Sciences will offer a new Bachelor of Science degree program in the growing field of Exercise Science beginning in the fall.

Exercise Science is the study of human movement. It includes interdisciplinary training in academic areas such as exercise physiology, nutrition, biomechanics, strength training, fitness assessment, exercise prescription, anatomy and physiology. Students will learn to conduct and evaluate health and fitness assessments, design and implement exercise programs based upon assessment findings, and to monitor health and fitness changes and progression over time.

Graduates of an Exercise Science program can work in a variety of careers, including: athletic trainer, aquatics director, athletics administration, cardiac rehab specialist, coaching at a school or college, director of youth camp/sports program, physical activity epidemiologist, exercise physiologist, fitness instructor or program director at commercial fitness center, massage therapist, personal trainer, physical education, program director of corporate fitness center, recreational therapist, respiration therapist, sports director at a resort, sports management, sport psychologist, sports information director, sports journalist, sports marketing, or a strength and conditioning coach. Some of these may require additional training. The undergraduate degree could also enable interested candidates to go on to advanced degree programs such as the Doctorate in Physical Therapy.

"Stockton found that there is a great need in terms of health care services in the region, and a strong demand from employers and prospective students for an Exercise Science program," said President Harvey Kesselman.

Southern New Jersey has been ranked as the state's least healthy region, according to the 2015 annual national report by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute.

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“This illustrates the urgent need in our region for health and fitness professionals equipped with the knowledge, skill and abilities to take the lead in developing programs that will improve health and quality of life,” Kesselman said.

Federal and state labor statistics show the health and fitness field is growing fast, with national, state and local career opportunities. A poll of employers in southern New Jersey found many eager to provide internships and ultimately jobs for graduates of an Exercise Science program. The employers suggested that the program include topics such as basic business skills, management, communication and leadership training, which have been incorporated in the curriculum.

The program will begin in September with up to 50 students projected in the first class. Enrollment will expand gradually over four years, with additional faculty to be hired for a projected enrollment of 200 or more. New facilities, such as a lab for Exercise Science majors, are included in the new academic building which will open in 2018 on the Galloway campus.

The program will be coordinated by Kelly Dougherty, who is currently an assistant professor of Health Sciences. She received her M.S. in Translational Research from the University of Pennsylvania and her Ph.D. and M.S. in Kinesiology, emphasis in Exercise Physiology, from the Pennsylvania State University. Dougherty completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia and previously was a research assistant professor of Pediatrics in the Department of Pediatrics, Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania.

Her research focuses on physical activity- and nutrition-related issues in healthy and chronically ill children, including those with cystic fibrosis, sickle cell disease and obesity. She has presented her research locally, nationally and internationally.

“Although the human body is designed for movement, people have become less physically active over time,” Dougherty said. “Regular physical activity is important because it is associated with a reduced risk of developing acute and/or chronic health conditions. More doctors are prescribing exercise instead of medicines for their patients to treat these adverse health conditions.

“This new program will address the public health need of physical inactivity by equipping students with the necessary knowledge and skills for entry-level Exercise Science positions in public or private industries or future graduate study in related areas,” she continued. “Students will be prepared for success in select certification examinations such as the American College of Sports Medicine’s (ACSM) Certified Exercise Physiologist and the National Strength and Conditioning Association’s (NSCA) Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist.

“We anticipate that any student, especially athletes, with a passion for health and fitness will be interested in this new degree option,” Dougherty said. “We are beyond excited to launch this new program to train the next generation of Exercise Science professionals.”

Dean Theresa Bartolotta of the School of Health Sciences explained how the new program fits with Stockton’s mission of excellence in teaching, dedication to learning and service to the community: “Faculty and staff in the School of Health Sciences are dedicated to improving the quality of life for individuals in our surrounding community. With this new program we move forward toward meeting one of our goals, which is to offer dynamic programs that are responsive to the needs of the region.”

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