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Spring 2019

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#### Recommended Citation

Lebowitz, Robyn, "The “Mindful McQuade Initiative” Barriers to Using the Bikes in McQuade Library" (2019). *Health Sciences Student Work*. 15.

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**The “Mindful McQuade Initiative” Barriers to Using the Bikes in McQuade Library**

**Robyn Lebowitz**

**Merrimack College**

## **ABSTRACT**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The mindful McQuade Initiative was created to bring mindful practices to Merrimack students, faculty, and staff. One of the many activities the library offers as part of the Mindful McQuade Initiative is use of exercise bikes as study breaks. The purpose of this study is to examine the barriers to using the “Mindful McQuade” bikes in the McQuade library.

### **METHODS:**

We recruited Merrimack students, faculty and staff to complete the study survey. Study investigators handed out flyers with details about the study and how to access the online survey as well as flyers posted to a variety of campus locations and posted on social media websites associated with the Merrimack community.

### **RESULTS:**

Ninety-five people completed the survey. Most people had not heard of The Mindful McQuade Initiative. Seventy-one percent of respondents had not participated in any activities related to Mindful McQuade. Most respondents were not aware of the bikes and/or did not want to exercise in the library. Many of the respondents had some good suggestions related to promotion ideas for the Mindful McQuade Initiative.

### **DISCUSSION:**

The results of this study will help the Mindful McQuade group to identify the key issues that can be addressed to improve community engagement in the “Mindful McQuade Initiative. Additional studies will be important to examine how initiatives like Mindful Merrimack may benefit the health of the community.

**CONCLUSION:**

This study showed that there is more promotion needed as in emails. Flyers, signs and social media so more of the Merrimack community is aware of the bikes and all aspects of the Mindful McQuade Initiative. There is also a need for more education to learn how to use the bikes and what they are there for.

## Introduction

Mindfulness is defined in many ways. For the purpose of this study, according to Psychology Today, mindfulness is defined as “the psychological process of bringing one’s attention to experiences in the present moment, which one can develop through practice of meditation or other training” (Mindfulness. (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/basics/mindfulness>) Besides promoting wellbeing, mindfulness also improves physical health. Mindfulness can help to relieve stress, lower blood pressure, improve sleep, reduce the risk of heart disease, reduce chronic pain and reduce gastrointestinal issues. (Benefits of Mindfulness (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://www.helpguide.org/harvard/benefits-of-mindfulness.htm>.) Mindfulness Programs have been introduced in-schools, hospitals, and veteran’s centers. These programs are helpful because they encourage awareness of the current moment to foster relaxation and calmness. (Mirkin, 2018)

Mindfulness training may be helpful for several individuals at high risk for high stress levels. Mindfulness training may help college students pay attention, control emotions, teach compassion, reduces stress and support calming feeling. These skills may be essential to academic and life success

There are many ways to practice mindfulness. The objective of any mindfulness method is to reach a state of relaxation by purposely being cognizant of your thoughts and feelings without judging how you feel. This allows the mind to refocus in the current moment. All mindfulness techniques can be a way of meditating. (Benefits of Mindfulness (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://www.helpguide.org/harvard/benefits-of-mindfulness.htm>.)

Libraries have always served communities, providing people with the opportunity to learn and share information. They are a perfect place to provide information to the community about healthy living, exercise, and nutrition. Past research noted that almost 20-30% of public libraries in the United States offer movement-based programs. Numerous libraries provide stress relieving activities such as therapy dogs, massage, coloring tables. Playdoh, meditation and yoga spaces during finals week as McQuade has done. They have exercise bikes, some yoga and even one library has a spinning studio with scheduled classes.

College libraries serve the campus community, including students, faculty and staff. College libraries can help students learn and stay healthy by offering programming promoting health living. The campus library can evolve into a place that provides activities, resources and therapies that improve one's capacity to create and gather knowledge and to stay well in mind and body. (Sparks, 2017)

Supporting young people's health and wellbeing is important. Many college students experience stress during exam time. (Galante, 2018) According to the authors of The Mindful Student Study, mindfulness is a way of training control of attention for purpose of mental health promotion. Mindfulness has been accepted and used at several colleges, reducing stress and improving mental health (Galante, 2018)

The Mindful McQuade Initiative was created to bring mindful practices for Merrimack students, faculty and staff. It was initially supported by a 2018 Provost's Innovation grant. One of the many activities that the library offers as part of the Mindful McQuade Initiative is the use of exercise bikes as study breaks. There are 2 recumbent bikes with desks attached so students can ride and study or just ride to take a break from studies. There are also two Espresso Bikes with full immersive technology. Beside the bikes, Mindful McQuade offers a Meditation Room

where one can go sit quietly with their thoughts. Merrimack community members can also check out a Verilux Happy Light to combat daylight savings darkness or can borrow a plant.

Mindfulness can be about doing physical activity while concentrating inward. The repetitiveness of exercise is beneficial for both your body and mind and may be an ideal training ground for mindfulness. (Jenkins, 2013)

Exercising as a respite may have significant advantages for people in the workforce as well. (Taylor 2005) Very few individuals who use McQuade library use the bikes as part of their daily routine or consider the benefits of the bikes as part a “mindful” activity.

The purpose of this study is to examine the barriers to using the “Mindful Merrimack” bikes in McQuade Library. The results will help the Mindful Mcquade group identify key issues that can be addressed to improve community engagement in the Mindful Merrimack Initiative. Even though this study was primarily about the bikes it connects with all parts of Mindful McQuade Initiative. One thing we wanted the Merrimack Community to understand is that the bikes are not there for exercise training. The main reason the bikes were purchased was to use them as part of a library break to clear your mind to prepare for more studying.

Our hypothesis is that The Mindful McQuade Initiative is not being utilized especially the bikes. We believe that a lack of knowledge contributes to the low participation. This study will help to identify barriers and ideas on how to encourage participation.

## **Methods**

We recruited Merrimack students, faculty and staff to complete the study survey. Participation was voluntary. We were looking for views of all members of the community, there was no reason to exclude anyone interested in participating. The study investigators handed out flyers with details about the study and how to access to the online survey. The flyers were posted at a variety of campus locations and at a variety of campus locations and posted on social media websites associated with the Merrimack community. The survey could be completed in 5-10 minutes. Study participants received a link to a 5-10-minute online survey.

## **Results**

The Mindful McQuade Survey was open for 29 days and got 95 responses. The ages of the respondents ranged from 18-68 years with the average age being 25.6. The respondents were 74.7% female and 22.8 male. The Merrimack College population who filled out the survey was made up of mostly undergraduates' students, (68.4%), graduate students, (11.5%), and employees, (18.9%). Most of the undergraduate respondents were in their 1<sup>st</sup> year (56.9%), 2<sup>nd</sup> year (9.2%), 3<sup>rd</sup> year (24.6%) and 4<sup>th</sup> year (6.1%). Most of the undergraduate students were in The School of Health Sciences. Of the 11 graduate students, most were master candidates for higher education (45.5%). Others were, Exercise Science (27.7%), Management, (18.8%) and Health and Wellness management student (one student).

Most study participants had not heard of the Mindful McQuade Initiative (55.8%). Seventy one percent of respondents have not participated in any activities related to Mindful McQuade. For those who have participated in Mindful McQuade activities, 17.9% used the meditation

room, 4% participated in a special program, 6.3% attended one of the movies, 4.2% have participated in a meditation class. 1% percent spent time with the puppies brought in during finals week.

Out of all 95 responses to “What are the reasons you are not using the bikes 20 % were not aware of the bikes, 19.8% of respondents were uncomfortable either because of placement of the bikes or just being embarrassed that someone might be looking at them. Others did not want exercise in the library and expressed concerns about sweating (5%) or preferring to work out in the gym (11%). Out of all the 95 respondents, 3.1% use the bikes and 2.1% are willing to try them next time they go to the library.

Table 1

**What Are the Reasons You Do Not or Do Use the Bikes?**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Uncomfortable/embarrassed using the bikes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “There out in the open and I feel insecure”</li> <li>• “Don’t work out while studying/prefer to work out in the gym”</li> <li>• “Usually when I go to the library, I’m getting my work done. I have time in my day when I go to the gym”</li> </ul>	<b>18</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>No reason/ just don’t use them</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Never thought to”</li> <li>• “I never think of it”</li> </ul>	<b>7</b>	<b>7.3%</b>
<b>Don’t want to get sweaty</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “For me personally, I wouldn’t want to be getting sweaty on a bike at the library while I was trying to work”</li> </ul>	<b>5</b>	<b>5.2%</b>
<b>Commuters/no time</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I commute to campus, so it isn’t feasible for me to use the bikes”</li> <li>• “I’m a commuter so I only go to the library if I need to print something out”</li> </ul>	<b>5</b>	<b>5.2%</b>
<b>Bike placement</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4.2%</b>

<b>People who don't use the bikes but are willing to try them</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.0%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>“I haven't used the bikes because I haven't been at the library for an extended period. However, the next time I'm studying for a few hours and go to the library I will try the bikes”</b></li> </ul>		

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Fifty-eight people responded to the question of how we can promote The Mindful McQuade Initiative. Nine percent thought there should be more emails, flyers, signs and more of a presence of social media sites. Six percent suggested more promotion for the meditation room and offering more meditation and adding mindful yoga classes. Six percent recommended changing the placement of the bikes. Three percent suggested giving faculty the option to incorporate the bikes in the classrooms or allowing the bikes to be brought to different buildings for a day for more awareness. Three percent proposed making Mindful McQuade more known in the library itself and to have someone available to show patrons how to use the bikes. One person suggested information about Mindful McQuade should be included in freshman orientation. One person suggested interviewing students who are on the bikes and putting it on Rise Vision.

Table 2

**Do You Have Any Comments on How We Can Promote the Mindful McQuade Initiative?**

<b>Promotion Idea's for The Mindful McQuade Initiative</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>More on social media, emails, flyers and signs</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>39.6%</b>
<b>None/NA</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>15.5%</b>
<b>Change the placement of the bikes</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6.8%</b>
<b>More promotion of the meditation room. Offer more meditation and mindful yoga classes</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6.8%</b>
<b>Incorporate them in the classroom or allow the bikes to be brought to different building for a day</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3.4%</b>
<b>Make the Mindful McQuade Initiative more known in the library itself. Have someone available to show you how to use the bikes</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3.4%</b>
<b>Include information for freshman orientation and first year students.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.7%</b>
<b>Give out a small prize for people who do 8 out of the 10 mindfulness things at McQuade Library in one month</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.7%</b>
<b>Interview people who are on the bikes and put it on Rise vision</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.7%</b>
<b>More support and snacks</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.7%</b>

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the barriers to using the “Mindful Merrimack” bikes in McQuade Library. The results will help with the Mindful McQuade group to identify key issues that can be addressed to improve community engagement in the “Mindful McQuade” Initiative. The bikes and other activities under the umbrella of the initiative are not being utilized by the Merrimack Community. Identifying the barriers and reasons why are important in promoting this Initiative and promoting healthy living on campus.

One thing we wanted the Merrimack community to understand is that the bikes are not there for exercise training. You can use them for a workout if you want to but the reason the bikes were brought in as part of The Mindful McQuade Initiative was to use them as part of a break to clear your mind, of like an “Activity Snack” for your brain. Other workplaces and universities are developing similar programs as part of a worksite wellness initiative. One example is the “Be Well at Work” program at the University of California Berkeley ([uhs.berkeley.edu](https://uhs.berkeley.edu))

“Be Well at Work” strives to create a healthy campus community and work environment through integrated programs and services designed to provide faculty and staff with tools and skills for leading a healthy lifestyle, preventing injury and illness, and contributing to higher performance, morale and job satisfaction. The results of the current project will help the Mindful McQuade Initiative to identify and address issues to improve community engagement.

**ACTIVE @WORK** **Activity Breaks**  
[uhs.berkeley.edu/activitybreaks](http://uhs.berkeley.edu/activitybreaks)

Making time for activity breaks throughout the work day can help you feel focused and energized, as well as help you fit some fitness into your day. Here are several types of activity breaks to mix it up!

**An Activity Break should be:**

- An opportunity to be physically active for a short stretch break, a 5-10 minute movement break, or 15-30 minute walking break.
- Completely voluntary and adaptive to fit anyone's abilities, including those with physical disabilities.
- Done at your own pace, comfortable and pain-free.
- Do-able without breaking a sweat.
- Fun and safe, and not require a professional leader.

**Standing Breaks**

- Current research for computer users recommends to change positions every 20-30 minutes: sit for 20, stand to do work for 8, and move for 2. This helps improve blood circulation, boost metabolism, and relieve physical discomforts.
- Feel the need for an energy boost? Stand up, march in place while raising your arms overhead for 30-60 seconds to feel renewed and ready to focus.
- Make it a habit to stand anytime you are talking to a colleague or on the phone, reading, or participating on a conference call or webinar.

**Stretch Breaks**

- Stretch your shoulders, neck, hips, back, and wrists throughout the day.
- Stand up to do 3-4 different stretches from these examples provided (most can be done seated, as needed).
- Use the CtrlWork stretch break software (or timer) for reminders to stand, move, and stretch throughout the day.

March In Place    Neck Stretch    Chair Twist    Side Stretch    Hip Circle    Chest Stretch

**Be Well at Work - Wellness Program**  
 Campus partners: Be Well at Work - Faculty/Staff Health Programs, Office of Environment, Health & Safety, Office of Human Resources, Physical Education Program, and Recreational Sports.  
[uhs.berkeley.edu/wellness](http://uhs.berkeley.edu/wellness)

**Be Well at Work**  
 Faculty/Staff Wellness

Figure 1. UC Berkeley's "Activity Breaks" Flyer

The limitations of the data were that even though this study was meant for the whole Merrimack Community it was responded to mostly by undergraduates and some graduates in Health Science and civil engineering majors. The representation of faculty and employees was also very limited. Considering there are 4,171 students on enrolled in all programs on campus with 3,323 of them being undergrads, this was a very small percentage of the community at Merrimack. This was not good representation of the whole community.

## **Conclusion**

What this study showed us was that there is more promotion needed as in emails, flyers, signs and social media so more of the Merrimack community is aware of the bikes and all aspects of the Mindful McQuade initiative. There is also a need for education to learn about how to use the bikes and what they are there for. Community members can certainly workout on the bikes if that is what they want to do. But people need to be educated more on mindful breaks from studying, whether you get on the bike for 10 minutes to clear you head or meditate or get up, walk around or stretch.

The Mindful McQuade group will continue to engage and educate the Merrimack Community, promoting programming and activities as part of a healthy lifestyle.

## Appendix 1

### Questions;

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. In what capacity are you at Merrimack College?
4. If you are an under graduate student, what year are you in?
5. What is your major?
6. Do you study in McQuade Library?
7. How often do you visit McQuade Library per week?
8. Have you heard of the Merrimack Initiative?
9. If yes, have you participated in any of the event and/or activities supported by the initiative?
10. We are aware that not many people are using the bikes that are part of the Mindful McQuade Initiative. What are the reasons that you do not or do use the bikes?
11. Do you have any other comments on how we can promote the Mindful McQuade Initiative?

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[www.bodykinetics.com](http://www.bodykinetics.com)