

Western Iowa Tech Community College is a Bicycle Friendly Employer

SUMMARY

More than 200 Western Iowa Technical Community College (WITCC) employees have access to facilities that support and encourage healthy and active lifestyles. From the onsite locker room that contains showers, lockers, and changing facilities to the indoor cycling classes, an outdoor trail that can be used for mountain biking, and outdoor bicycle racks, WITCC is making biking to work and at work an option for their employees.



CHALLENGE

The rate of obesity continues to climb across the country and the incidence of obesity in lowans isn't any different. According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's County Health Rankings, 32% of Woodbury County, IA adults report a BMI of 30 or more compared to 30% of lowans. One factor contributing to the rise in obesity rates is the lack of physical activity. With many individuals spending one-third or more of their day in the workplace and less than half of adults getting the recommended amount of daily physical activity, encouraging biking to and from work and providing environmental supports in the workplace is a great way to bridge the two. Doing so will help businesses increase productivity, improve employee satisfaction, and help contain health care cost because employees will be happier and healthier.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

Providing simple amenities like an outdoor bike rack or indoor bike parking, a shower and a changing room, or simply a tire pump can reduce worker's compensation claims, sick time, and turnover. Discuss these ideas with your CEO, Human Resources Director, or Wellness Coordinator and visit www.healthsiouxland.org for more information on ways you can become a bike friendly employer.

"As a wellness committee, we want to promote health and wellness and this is one way we do that."

- Dr. Barbara Anne Huculak

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SOLUTION

In an effort to support employees to be more physically active, WITCC built their new wellness facility to include amenities they knew would support and encourage employees, retirees, and students, to be more physically active. Even though the amenities were not specifically included to support biking to and from work those amenities do just that. Providing outdoor bicycle parking and allowing employees an opportunity to bring their bicycle into buildings provides employees with options for the securing their bikes and protecting them from the elements throughout the year. The indoor locker room also provides a space for employees who choose to commute a place to shower and change their clothes. They can also secure personal belongings in lockers.

RESULTS

Building in the environmental supports which encourage and support employees who choose to bike to and from work has made it easier for the avid bicycle commuters. They have not seen a dramatic increase in the number of bike commuters but they do have employees who exercise during their lunch hour because they have a place to shower and change clothes. When asked about the facilities, wellness committee member Dr. Barbara Anne Huculak states: "As a wellness committee, we want to promote health and wellness and this (providing employees access to these amenities) is one way we do that."

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

WITCC wellness committee is working to increase the number of employees who bike to work on a regular basis. The last three years they have promoted and encouraged employees to participate in National Bike to Work Day which is held the third Friday in May. They plan to continue to promote Bike to Work Day and will also continue promoting bicycle commuting. The WITCC wellness committee is also committed to bringing awareness to biking and environmental impacts that would support bicycling throughout the community by participating in local advocacy organizations and coalitions and supporting any infrastructure changes like bike lanes that would make it safer and easier for employees to commute by bike.

WITCC was awarded the Bike Friendly Employer award from the SIMPCO Bicycle-Pedestrian Roundtable in May 2018.