Although only a year old, a Florida college wellness program has garnered widespread support and involvement from employees and partners.

Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ) is a public, nonprofit higher education institution that offers more than 150 degree and certificate programs to meet the education and training needs of more than 50,000 students per year.

The college officially kicked off its wellness program in 2016, but the planning began in 2015 after FSCJ joined the Florida College System Risk Management Consortium, a group of Florida colleges insured by Florida Blue. FSCJ previously had a self-funded plan.

“We wanted to take advantage of the program and incentives that were available to the college and to the employees through the FSCJ plan,” said Christina Goodell, CEBS, a professor of business at FSCJ. “We found our employees eager to learn and get involved.”

FSCJ worked with partners including its health insurer, employee assistance program (EAP) and even its vending machine supplier to create wellness programs and healthy options for employees.

The FSCJ wellness program is available to approximately 1,300 full-time employees and over 1,500 part-time employees. Many of the programs and services offered were created to be of interest to the entire employee population.

Bringing four campuses and three centers together across two counties was no easy task. The wellness initiative had four clearly defined objectives:

1. **Create a wellness committee and meet every two months.** The college created a wellness committee that included representatives from all employee groups and locations. A wellness committee member from each location takes the lead for communicating offerings to its campus or center through lunch and learns, campus communications, staff meetings and department gatherings.

2. **Sponsor a personal health assessment program.** In partnership with Florida Blue, FSCJ held personal health assessments at each of the campuses and centers. About 25% (314) of eligible employees completed the personal health assessment and biometric screening surpassing the first-year goal.

3. **Support the Blue Rewards incentive program.** Employees have an opportunity to earn participation points through an incentive program offered by Florida Blue, which they access through the insurer’s website. Employees earn points by tracking physical fitness activities, attending wellness seminars, taking online assessments and participating in a personal health assessment.

   In 2016, 679, or 52%, of FSCJ employees earned points. A total of 700 points will earn a participant the maximum $175 in retail and restaurant gift cards. “One employee was so committed that he earned 850 points!” said Steve Beard, FSCJ training and development coordinator. This year the wellness program committee hopes to increase participation to 1,000 employees.
Provide five or more educational events on wellness and related subjects.

- Wellness seminars were offered on a variety of topics at each location as a followup to the personal health assessments focusing on weight management, stress, diabetes and fitness.
- Free flu shots were provided to all employees as part of the open enrollment process for benefits.
- The wellness committee worked with vendors to provide healthy snack options. Between 50% and 60% of all snacks available in vending machines are now “healthy choices,” defined as snacks low in calories, fat and sugar, including gluten-free and organic options. Offerings include fruit snacks, oven-baked potato chips, pretzels, animal crackers, nuts and popcorn.
- The wellness committee supported the YMCA First Coast Games, a citywide competition in bowling, volleyball, tennis, football, softball, basketball, ultimate Frisbee and soccer, culminating with a 5K run. More than 30 Jacksonville companies and 75 FSCJ employees participated. FCSJ had to conduct tryouts for a spot on the six-member bowling team due to the high turnout. “Employees had fun and enjoyed the opportunity to get to know employees from neighboring companies,” Beard noted.
- Employees were offered programs and assessments through FSCJ’s EAP Health Advocate, as well as the American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association.
- Employees participated in a 5K run in support of a breast cancer nonprofit, heart walks and the Relay for Life event held on the North Campus.

The wellness committee is building on last year’s successes to increase overall employee involvement in 2017 and beyond, through:

- Updating the wellness program website
- Adding postcard mailings to its communication strategy
- Starting an on-site Weight Watchers program
- Scheduling additional wellness seminars
- Increasing the number of eligible employees who will complete personal health assessments and screenings to 500
- Supporting the “80% by 2018” goal for colon cancer screening, sponsored by the National Cancer Screening Council
- Looking for new partnerships to expand wellness offerings.

Although the FSCJ program is just beginning its second year, Chief Human Resource Officer Mark Lacey notes that wellness is already becoming a key decision factor, so that appropriate business decisions are made to ensure the wellness programs continue to thrive. Health guidelines, rather than sales, now dictate which snacks are found in campus vending machines. Fresh fruits and healthy beverages are provided as options at employee meetings. There is also a greater emphasis on charity events that include a wellness component like 5K runs and other walks.