

Published March 3rd, 2021

SMC students 'de-stress' on campus at highly-rated rec center

By Vera Kochan



SMC students use outdoor Strength Station.
 Photo Rebecca Harper

reservations 24 hours in advance, students can partake in outdoor recreation opportunities including using cardio equipment such as spin bikes and Erg (rowing machines); participating in lap swim; strength stations (where students bring weight equipment outside); and outdoor fitness classes.

"We offer so many different exercise opportunities and activities that cater to all the students here at SMC," said Savannah Gagnon, a junior majoring in business who also works at JARC. "Before COVID, it was the place that most students spent their time."

Corral was disappointed when county mandates closed JARC's indoor facilities just as she was becoming a daily user. "Not being indoors anymore is really frustrating, because I don't think our facility necessarily contributed to the spread of COVID due to the constant disinfecting by attentive staff members. We had minimal cases in general," she said, "so I truly believe the facility should be open to support students' well-being. It has been more challenging now because of the restricted outdoor use, and I know it doesn't only impact my well-being, but many others at SMC who use their own workouts as an escape. I still go daily, but my workouts have definitely changed. I think as someone who puts a lot of value in exercise for mental health, it is important to be grateful for the access I do have and remaining optimistic for the future of opening instead of dwelling on the frustrations."

A sophomore majoring in economics, Erich Storti admits that COVID has made his college experience a challenging one. "Transitioning to remote learning was a difficult hurdle to overcome, and not being able to spend time with your friends and family has also been tough."

As a member of the SMC Men's Rugby Team, Storti said using the JARC has helped him significantly throughout the year. "While following the laws of our county, we are able to be as a team and workout. The JARC gives us a place where we are able to step away from a chaotic world. It has been extremely helpful in giving us a break from the constant Zoom meetings and providing a place for us to alleviate any stress."

Gagnon considers herself lucky to live on campus this year and hopes that by her senior year she and her fellow classmates can look forward to the college experience that she has always dreamed of. Into her third year working at JARC, she has noticed an increase in students using the facilities "even with the restrictions placed due to COVID-19."

Mentioning all of the outdoor prospects for a workout, Gagnon said, "With this, it gives on-campus students a different variety of exercise opportunities to de-stress during these times. Many students come in for their routine workouts, but there have been many new faces, which I believe is due to some anxiety surrounding COVID-19."

Corral praised the campus community for doing its part to keep everyone safe. She named weekly testing and efficient housing protocols for any who test positive for the virus, along with student cooperation in adhering to the school's mandates. "Even though I can admit to frustrations, I know we all have to do our part and keep gratitude near to prevent more stress and cope with the pandemic as a whole."

"We hear from students and parents who appreciate the opportunity to have this facility," Senior Director for Campus Recreation Rebecca Harper said. "When the county moves to the 'Red Tier' gyms can operate

inside, and we will offer indoor use to the students."

While the indoor center is currently closed due to COVID restrictions, pre-pandemic amenities include: a 14,000-square-foot fitness area with state-of-the-art cardio equipment, top of the line weight machines and Olympic weight lifting area; three basketball courts (one of which can be converted to an indoor soccer court); a group exercise room with hardwood floors and wall-to-wall mirrors; a Functional Training room with additional weight equipment; a Spin room with 24 indoor cycling bikes; a climbing wall with opportunity to belay with a partner or automatic belay device; an Aquatic Area that includes a pool deck and patio for lounging, a Hydrotherapy spa for relaxation and a 10-lane pool with diving board and large shallow end; locker rooms with showers and lockers for students; and locker rooms with showers and lockers for faculty and staff. Services include weekly fitness classes, personal training opportunities, CPR & Lifeguard Training, and endless student employment opportunities.

Harper recollected the all-too-brief period last year when gyms were allowed to resume activities. "Campus Recreation, as a department, worked endlessly to reopen the facility. Protocol was developed with industry guidance, and the procedure in place made it safe for our members. We were one of the first colleges in the Bay Area to open its doors and offer services to students. This is in part to the dedication and hard work of Campus Recreation."

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[back](#)

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