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Clark College offers fitness classes through its Mature Learning Program that cost only \$30 for 10 weeks.

# An exercise in frugality

## You can get into shape without going broke

*Columbian staff and wire reports*

Times are tough. We don't need Ben Bernanke to tell us that. So we're all looking for bargains, even when it extends to fitness classes.

Health clubs, of course, offer an array of options. But for the really cost-conscious, it might help to think outside the gym for a fitness class fix, be it yoga, ping-pong or lap swimming.

City parks and recreation programs are reasonably priced and offer a variety of activities.

But there's another option, even more frugal than city-run classes, one that you may not have considered:

Go to college.

Community college, that is. Not full time, of course, just in your spare time.

And, for those who toil in the standard 9-to-5 workday, many of the community college classes are offered in the early evening or morning.

"It is very reasonable," says Jean Snuggs, dean of the physical education department at American River College, in Sacramento, Calif. "You can repeat a class as long as you're making progress, but there is a limit of the number of repeats."

"We have some students and people from the community continually taking classes, but we won't just

let them take the same thing over and over. We're not a health club."

Clark College offers a range of exercise classes for people of all ages, as well as a fitness facility.

Fitness classes available through the Community Education Program at Clark College include fencing, golf, yoga, tai chi, belly dance and line dancing.

Prices and class sizes vary. A five-week fencing class, for example, is \$69 and is capped at 25 participants. Six weeks of yoga instruction is \$125, and enrollment is limited to 20 students. Most classes are offered in the evenings or on weekends to accommodate working professionals.

## Classes at Clark

People can and often do repeat classes, said JoAnn Ames, Clark College Continuing Education Program manager.

For those 55 and older, Clark College offers fitness classes through its Mature Learning Program. Classes include qigong, a Chinese discipline emphasizing breathing and movement, and tai chi. These classes cost \$30 and meet twice a week for 10 weeks.

The Thompson Fitness Center at Clark College is available to a broad section of the community and offers elliptical machines, treadmills and other cardio equipment, as well as weight-training machines and free weights.

Anyone taking a Clark College

class can get a fitness center membership for \$15 per quarter, although those enrolled in certain physical education, Mature Learning and health classes can use the center for free. In addition, those 16 and older who've taken a Clark College class can join the Alumni Association for \$15 per year. They are eligible for fitness center passes at a cost of \$15 per quarter or \$40 per year.

Penguin Athletic Club members also can use the fitness center for \$15 per quarter or \$40 per year. Membership starts at \$50 per person or \$100 per family per year and includes free admission to all regular season home athletic events.

On the downside, community college classes tend to be larger than those offered by parks and rec or health clubs.

## The intimidation factor

Another hindrance for some people, particularly retirees, is that they might be intimidated by the younger college students.

Even in a class designed for younger students, such as hip-hop aerobics at American River College, instructor Carrie Pereira says: "I get a wide age range of people. They

learn principles of cardiovascular and the moves."

And Ron Hubbartt, who teaches tai chi and other fitness courses at American River College, says his students are primarily college age but that all the groups work together well. "We do get a sizable number of older adults," he says.

Participants do more than just the physical activity. Students learn principles of nutrition and stress

management, as it may pertain to their activity or fitness level in general.

As Hubbartt says, they learn the "why" as well as the "how" of tai chi during lectures that accompany the actual participation.

"It's important to learn the concepts of an activity," he says. "Our goal is to educate people so that if, at a party, someone asks them what tai chi is, they can answer it intelligently."

Snuggs says all of ARC's fitness and activity instructors have at least master's degrees in physical education. "That's another way we try to separate ourselves from a health club," she says.

*Columbian staff writer Mary Ann Albright contributed to this article.*

### On the Web:

For more information about Continuing Education and Mature Learning classes at Clark College, visit [clark.edu/corporate\\_continuing\\_education](http://clark.edu/corporate_continuing_education)

To learn more about Clark College's Thompson Fitness Center, visit [clark.edu/student\\_services/fitness\\_center](http://clark.edu/student_services/fitness_center)