

2019 ITGA Larry Abernathy Award Nomination

Miami University, Oxford, Ohio

A Vision: To be the Healthiest College Town in America

The City of Oxford, Ohio, and Miami University share a vision to become the healthiest college town in America. We have focused our intensive partnership work on health and wellness—which we have intentionally conceived of broadly to encompass the promotion of physical and mental health as well as a healthy economy, healthy climate, and economic and community health.

This town-gown work around health and wellness was spurred on by the new leadership of Miami University President Greg Crawford and Mayor Kate Rousmaniere, both avid cyclists, who, in their first meeting with the Miami-Oxford Town Gown Initiative Team in late summer 2016 conceived of the goal of becoming the healthiest college town in America.

Our goal is to change the narrative about our college town to one of health and wellness. We do this by encouraging on-going coordinated work around health and wellness for all ages and in all spaces of the community. We draw on the social service infrastructure and individual and institutional initiatives and work to engage both the community and the university.

We have town gown community health initiatives in the following areas:

- Public Health Policy and Infrastructure Planning
- Mental and Physical Health
- Economic and Community Health
- Climate Health

Public Health Policy and Infrastructure Planning

Public Health Policy

At the center of our community's work on Health and Wellness is the Coalition for a Healthy Community - Oxford Area which began in 1997 as a community wide organizational structure to raise awareness about health and wellness through community collaboration.

The Coalition leadership team, with representation from the school district, university, hospital, city and local townships, and intentional representation from senior citizens, the faith community, and social service and cultural minority communities, promotes an environmental change strategies approach, focusing on changing the underlying conditions in the community to promote health and wellness. The Coalition focuses on “making the healthiest choice the easiest choice” for all residents of the Oxford area.

Infrastructure Planning

In Fall, 2017, University and community agencies supported the Coalition's sponsorship of a visit by Mark Fenton, a public health planning and transportation consultant. Mark Fenton's recommendations have led to the promotion of a complete streets policy, a series of community walk audits, an expanded trail network and increased communication between the city and the university on alternative transportation pathways.

A longtime vision of the community was assured in Spring 2018 when the community overwhelmingly passed a levy to support the Oxford Area Trails, a 12-mile multi use paved path that will circumnavigate the City of Oxford. University and City staff, students and local residents served on the planning committee. The University showed its commitment through their donation of over \$700,000 toward grant matches and easement access to their land.

In Fall 2018, Miami University was awarded a Bike Friendly status by the League of American Bicyclists. While many universities incentivize health and wellness on campus, many of Miami's efforts are intentionally inclusive of and coordinate with the community, including the linking of bike lanes and the synchronization of pedestrian and bike plans.

Physical and Mental Health

To address the needs of physical and mental health, we have taken a systems approach and provide programming, education, promotion and direct services.

Joint Committees:

Alcohol Coordinating Council (ACC) and the Town-Gown Initiative Team (TGIT). Over the last several years, these two town-gown inclusive entities have worked cooperatively to better understand and reduce high-risk alcohol consumption. Their work has included: participation in the ITGA-Responsible Retailing Forum sponsored Alcohol Responsibility Program; hosting the 2017 Ohio Town-Gown Conference that focused on alcohol-misuse and ended in a state-wide call to action; stronger Oxford-Miami police coordination and partnership, with an emphasis on house parties and Saturday "day drinking"; and Oxford City Council-Miami administration cooperation on complementary Code of Conduct (Miami) and ordinance (Oxford) revisions.

The development of a new Miami Student Health Survey has revealed declines in virtually every drinking measure of concern between 2017 and 2018.

Education and promotion

Community Advocacy with Rox the Fox

The Coalition for a Healthy Community - Oxford Area's mascot, Rox the Fox, regularly attends school, community, and university events (including University Convocation—Rox is good friends with the Miami University Redhawks mascot, Swoop)

Yoga in the park

The Coalition hosts weekly Yoga in the Park every Saturday morning during the Summer which has become a community staple for both students and residents alike.

MOVE (Miami & Oxford Value Exercise) Boot Camp

The MOVE boot camps began in 2018 as an initiative of Dr. Renate Crawford, University Ambassador to promote community exercise in a free community space. Boot Camps are offered monthly on Saturday mornings at the Miami University President's' house and at select off campus sites (in February 2019, the MOVE boot camp was held at the local retirement community and attracted over 50 people!) and welcomes students, community members, and visitors to an intensive and fun hour of exercise led by Miami University fitness instructors.

Direct Services:

Mental Health Training

The Coalition Mental Health Workgroup has facilitated the training of over 600 community members in Mental Health First Aid, in which participants learn how to identify individuals in crisis or distress, reach out and encourage that individuals seek professional help. Partnership with the University has been key in this initiative, including space for training and recruiting trainers for the curriculum.

Haven at College

In Fall 2017, the City of Oxford coordinated with the University to support the opening of the Haven at College, an off campus, out-patient treatment and recovery support service that provides college-aged individuals dealing with addiction a community of support throughout their recovery and treatment process. Haven staff has integrated their work closely with both the University Physical and Mental Health services and with the local hospital and first responders.

Economic and Community Health

The Chamber Miami Business Alliance (MBA) is a monthly group of City, University, and Chamber of Commerce leaders who meet to brainstorm ideas about economic development in our college town. Originating out of this group is the Fall Uptown Takeover when first year students are invited on a scavenger hunt of Uptown businesses and services to introduce them

to the town. This group also works on the promotion of community business and services at University orientation and parents' weekends.

The University President and City Mayor have annually filmed short promotional videos to show at University games to encourage visitors to "go uptown after the game" for a meal or to shop.

The University and City have also coordinated on a variety of efforts to promote cultural and civic health by reaching across boundaries by providing community wide multicultural events, such as the Latino Multidiversity Festival and Chinese festivals, both sponsored by University offices and held in the Uptown park. The annual Martin Luther King celebration, at which the University opens its doors to the community for a free breakfast and exhibit of a local school children's art competition is sponsored by the Oxford NAACP.

In the first weekend of school in late summer, for the past 15 years, community and university members have welcomed college students back to town by visiting off-campus student housing in the Uptown Walkabout to provide information for student residents about social norms and services offered by the City of Oxford. The City rolls out the red carpet to welcome international students and visitors with Welcome to Oxford banners translated into 17 different languages around town.

Since 1998, we have hosted a joint University and Community-Welcome Back picnic for students and residents to begin fostering relationships. Over 4,000 people attend this event each year.

Climate Health

The community's work on health has also been inspired by concepts of environmental sustainability, and the promotion of local food, public transportation, transportation, and recycling and composting.

In Spring 2018, graduate students at Miami's Institute for Environmental Sustainability researched best strategies for the City to adopt the Global Covenant of Mayors, a global coalition of city leaders addressing climate change by pledging to cut greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for the future impacts of climate change. The group is currently conducting a Greenhouse Gas Inventory of the City.

With the City's e-scooter contract that began in Fall 2018, students reported using fewer cars for short trips. The City's contract is expanding this Spring to include e-bicycles.

Students and community members join together to support the Saturday morning Farmers Market and the University's Institute for Food that operates a sustainable farm on the edge of the city and cultivates partnerships between local community groups and businesses to enhance food access and resilience and community engagement

Other community initiatives that rely on university student and staff support include the city's new food composting program, and student club and Greek Life Clean Up and recycling programs. In the week before Spring Commencement, for the past 14 years, university and community members join together in Sharefest, an annual community-wide recycling program dedicated to the collection and redistribution of items donated by on and off campus Miami University students and the Oxford community. All donated items are donated to local social service agencies and Food Banks.

Summary:

In the past three years, both Miami University and the City of Oxford have made great strides in our goals to become the healthiest college town. We are seeing the fruits of our efforts and these can be witnessed by the following results

- Student reported declines in risky drinking behavior
- 600 citizens trained in mental health first aid.
- Passage of \$10M levy for 12 miles of bike trails. 1 mile built, 3 more on the way!
- New bike lanes, new e scooters, decreased reliance on cars.
- ongoing community-university efforts around climate change, including pollinator gardens, food composting and increased recycling.

We are proud of our work and would be honored to win the Larry Abernathy Town & Gown Award.

Video:

The included video highlights the results of our work together and celebrates a vibrant and healthy community. It represents how we embody the mission of the International Town & Gown Association.

[Video Link](#)