USC RECREATION
AND FITNESS
GUIDEBOOK
When the sprawling USC Village fitness center opened in fall 2017, it nearly doubled the total indoor recreational space available to Trojans—jumping from 50,000 to approximately 80,000 square feet.

“It’s the biggest increase in workout space since the Lyon Center opened in 1989,” says Vice President for Student Affairs Ainsley Carry. “This has transformed student wellness at USC.”

The new power lifting cages, benches and dumbbells, free weights and stacking stations, not to mention nearly a hundred cardio machines, are a fitness bonanza for a student body hungry for more ways to be well.

Over the past two years, the university invested more than $5 million in expanding recreational opportunities on campus. The 30,000 square-foot USC Village fitness complex complements a freshly renovated Lyon Center, where brand new Olympic weight-training and cardio equipment were installed over the summer. More exercise rooms were added throughout USC housing and outdoor fitness stations have sprung up at three campus locations.

USC was a commuter school when the Lyon Center was built nearly 30 years ago. Today, it’s a residential campus—home to 19,000 undergraduates and 25,000 graduate and professional students.

Some 7,000 Trojans participate in intramural sports. Thousands more belong to USC’s 50 club sports and rec groups, administered by the student-run Recreation Club Council.

The Lyon Center alone gets up to 3,500 users a day. The USC Village complex has allowed an already-robust schedule of exercise classes to grow from 50 to 75 sessions a week. Between the two facilities, students with a group exercise pass have access to muscle conditioning, TRX, SCycling, Pilates, yoga, barre and a variety of dance and martial-arts style cardio workouts.

But the most popular class, by far, is F45. “It’s 45 minutes of premium, high-intensity interval training. No two classes are the same,” says Director of Recreational Sports Justine Gilman, herself a USC workout class instructor and ACE certified personal trainer. A private studio would charge $100 a week for F45 classes, she says. For Trojans, a $105 fitness membership—good at both University Park facilities and the HSC Fitness Center on Soto Street—buys exercise class privileges all semester, including five F45 classes.
A day. Sign-ups are easy through the RecIt Fitness app, which is important because classes fill fast.

Even with the recent facilities expansion, gyms and exercise rooms, swimming pools, tennis courts, and racquetball courts, intramural fields and green spaces are seldom empty at USC. Sometimes recreational activity spills over to campus building porticos, courtyards and parking structures.

That’s OK with Gilman. “We’re in this urban setting, so we have to be creative,” she says. “We want students to recreate. To get out and move, to find a way to have fun and be healthy.”

Carry couldn’t agree more. “Recreation and fitness is easily incorporated into students’ schedules. It’s a great way to meet people, de-stress and build muscle,” he says. “We’re here to support all that healthy activity.”

**FITNESS FACT:**

There’s a high correlation between the fitness level of the people close to you, and your own physical fitness.
Deep in the chemical laboratories of the USC Viterbi School of Engineering, Tiffany Truong is absorbed in understanding and replicating the stupefying complexity of nature. Moving confidently among chemical reactors and microelectronics, the chemical engineering major makes it look easy. But the process requires levels of concentration that strain body and mind. She checks the time. It’s 7 p.m. Truong tidies her workspace, sheds her lab coat, laces up her running shoes and jogs over to Parking Structure B, where the music is pumping and more than 50 students have gathered.

They share a common goal: indulge a passion for urban dance with fellow Trojans. They are known as Chaotic 3, a multicultural hip-hop dance group that spun out of CASA (USC Chinese American Student Association). Open to new and veteran dancers alike, the team pushes the boundaries of dance to dizzying displays of synchronicity and self-expression, winning its share of intercollegiate competitions.

Truong is excited: “We’re like a family. Dance is our escape and motivator.” She loves that she has to shout to be heard over the music. The floor is literally shaking. It happens in two blinks. She jumps into the mix—agile, self-assured and so good. It’s hard to believe this is the same student who a half-hour earlier was hunched over a computer, checking mathematical formulas.

Truong and Chaotic 3 are part of a university-wide movement that re-imagines campus as a playground for recreation and exercise.

**FITNESS FACT:**

A 160 LB PERSON CAN BURN 457 CALORIES IN ONE HOUR OF FAST-PACED OR AEROBIC DANCING.
Four years ago, USC Marshall School of Business student Eric Chan ’15 turned his desire for state-of-the-art fitness stations into a business proposal that keeps reaping dividends for Trojans today.

Unsatisfied with the outdated pull-up rig equipment at Cromwell Field, Chan and several classmates put together a 64-page formal proposal for major upgrades, designed their own blueprints and even secured seed money.

Chan, now a Seattle-based program manager with Amazon, brought together university administrators, fitness experts, contractors and investors in a student-led effort to transform the field into a cutting-edge outdoor recreational space.

Today Cromwell Field features customized pull-up rigs for rope climbs (Chan’s personal design), gymnastics and power racks adjustable to the heights of different athletes, plyometric boxes and rubber matting throughout. The site is perfect for bodyweight training.

“I love to see this level of student initiative and involvement,” says Vice President for Student Affairs Ainsley Carry. In fact, Carry liked it so much he decided to build on it. Two SYNRGY BlueSky outdoor training sets are now available to Trojans from 6 am to 10 pm: one by Parkside Residential College and one by Parking Structure X.

The versatile system of monkey bars, arc ladders, steps, pull-up bars, platforms and cargo nets comes with diagrams to instruct beginners in proper form, and handy QR labels that experienced users can scan with a smartphone to watch demos of different training options. “It’s really cool,” says USC Rec Sports program specialist Monique Ramirez. “You can exercise alone or do a group workout with friends. There are dozens of possible combinations.”

Outdoor stations are another way Trojans can own their fitness options. “We are here to support our students in realizing their goals, participating on the decision-making committees and taking control of their own exercise,” Carry says.
Jason Kutch is one physically active intellectual. When the assistant professor of biokinesiology and physical therapy isn’t researching the origins of chronic pelvic pain, you’ll find him cycling, leading a Peaks and Professors hike, solo-climbing Mt. Baldy or balancing on “The Slackline”—an outdoor recreational invention his department sets up for students and staff during lunch.

Kutch wants to change the way we think about exercise. “It can be purposeful, useful work that’s integrated into our daily routines,” he says. Exercise’s usefulness goes beyond helping to shed pounds. It has a big influence on body confidence, a major public health concern in recent years. Lack of body confidence can discourage people from being active and impact personal relationships and achievements, research shows.

“When you're exercising, you're creating a mental model of your body. With every movement, your body creates an 'efference copy' of that command, improving the way your body works,” Kutch explains. There is a fundamental misconception about body confidence—it’s not about how you look, it’s about how you feel.

“The key to solid body confidence is to integrate exercise into the day,” Kutch says. Whether that’s climbing stairs, cycling to class, walking the Slackline, dancing or joining an intramural sports team, “the purpose is fun. You’ll be getting the workout without even knowing it.”

His advice fits nicely with the “Be Well USC” campaign to create a campus culture that promotes active habits and healthy living and prioritizes well-being over weight-loss and appearance. Many students are joining the movement. How about you?

**FITNESS FACT:**

Exercise makes you feel more energized because it releases endorphins into the blood.
TEN MUST-TRY RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES ON CAMPUS

1. STEP OUT TO WORKOUT
Exercise anytime you like under the open sky. Stop by one of three outdoor fitness stations on the University Park Campus. SYNRGY BlueSky stations are located in front of Parking Structure X and on the Parkside Residential College lawn. Scan the QR codes on the equipment for exercise suggestions. Cromwell Field’s custom-designed fitness stations include high bars and platform boxes popular with weight trainers. Bring your own medicine ball or TRX straps to enhance your workout.

WHEN & WHERE?
PSX & Parkside: 6 am to 10 pm at
Cromwell Field: Before 1 pm & after 5 pm daily

2. JOIN A CLUB TEAM
USC has more than 50 club teams, many competing at a national level. From mainstream to esoteric, there’s something for everybody. Here’s a partial list.
- Ice hockey
- Lacrosse
- Rugby
- Soccer
- Softball
- Volleyball
- Wrestling
- Ultimate Frisbee
- Beach volleyball
- Gymnastics
- Judo
- Kendo
- Taekwondo
- Boxing
- Marathon
- Cricket
- Equestrian
- Polo
- … and much more

CONTACT:
bit.ly/RCCContacts

3. IMPROVE YOUR DANCE MOVES
Freestyle or fox trot, hip hop or salsa, whatever your scene, getting out on the dance floor is a great way to stay in shape and meet new people. Beginners are always welcome. Here are just a few of the recreational dance clubs to find your groove at USC:
- Chaotic 3
- SC Ballroom and Latin
- Dance Team
- Street Dance Society
- Break Through Hip Hop
- Drishiti
- Traditional Chinese Dance at USC
- Xpressions Dance Company
- Zeher
- African Dance Club

CONTACT:
bit.ly/RCCContacts
bit.ly/EngageSC

4. SAY ‘NAMASTE’
Stretch, breathe, connect. Find your inner balance and serenity. It’s good for the body and the soul. With so many yoga and mindfulness options on campus, there’s no excuse for staying stressed.
- Yoga, mat Pilates, PiYO and yoga sculpt at the Lyon Center and USC Village Center: usc.edu/recsports
- Yoga at the Fisher Museum: fisher.usc.edu
- Happy Hour at the Engemann Student Health Center (tai chi, yoga, mindfulness): usc.edu/owhp
- Mindfulness practice groups at various campus locations: mindful.usc.edu
- Student orgs like Breathe SC and the Yoga and Meditation Club at: bit.ly/EngageSC

5. GET INTRAMURAL
Play singles tennis alone or join a squad for flag football. From rookies to fierce competitors, everyone can participate. Whatever your sport—basketball, soccer, dodgeball, volleyball, racquetball, flag football—USC hosts recreational leagues at every level. Play once a week for four to six weeks. Advance to the playoffs for maximum bragging rights. Get out there and win.

INFO:
uscintramurals@gmail.com
SIGNUPS:
myrecsports.usc.edu

Students participate in the free yoga series hosted at the USC Fisher Museum.
6. MAKE SPLASH IN WATER SPORTS

USC gets 292 days of sunshine, so go ahead, get wet. Your heart and lungs with thank you. Trojans have plenty of options through recreational clubs, including:

- Crew
- Swimming
- Surf
- Water polo
- Dragon boat
- Scuba Dive

CONTACT:
bit.ly/RCCContacts

7. TAKE A GROUP EX-FITNESS CLASS

Wake up with PiYo (Pilates & yoga), go SCycling between classes, take a muscle conditioning or TRX study break, and end your day with a high-energy cardio dance or F45 workout. Rec Sports holds more than 70 classes a week in many formats. Plan your workout around your class schedule. Those mood-improving endorphins relieve stress, help you sleep better and keep you going through midterms and beyond.

CONTACT:
recsports@usc.edu

SCHEDULE:
bit.ly/LRC_GroupEx

8. CHECK OUT “OPEN REC”

There’s nothing like a pick-up game to break the ice, build your teamwork skills and burn off a late-night study snack. Lyon Center and USC Village courts are open until midnight. “Open Rec” badminton, basketball and volleyball games happen every week. Come alone or bring your team.

CONTACT:
recsports@usc.edu

“OPEN REC” INFO:
recsports@usc.edu

STUDENT REC CLUBS:
bit.ly/RCCContacts

9. PICK UP A RACKET

Swing your arm. Hit the ball. What’s not to love? Between the Ping Pong Posse, Tennis Club, Squash Club and Badminton Club, every Trojan can get in on the racquet. For less structured racquet sports, check out “Open Rec” times at the Lyon Center, USC Village Center and the Tennis Complex.

CONTACT:
recsports@usc.edu

10. HIKE L.A.

Just outside of the high rises of our city are tons of trails for taking in nature while getting fit. Student orgs like SCOutfitters and Peaks & Professors lead frequent outings to destinations both local and exotic. Adventure Gurus, Climbing Club, and Keck Hiking Club are also great options for outdoorsy Trojans. Check them all out to see what “peaks” your interest.

Students can search student orgs at:
bit.ly/EngageSC
USC’s mission is to create a culture where wellness and health are valued and naturally incorporated into students’ lives. All members of USC’s campus community are encouraged to Be Well at USC. USC encourages students to stay healthy and Be Well by maintaining a balance between academics and their social life. Continuing to exercise, eating healthy, getting enough sleep, maintaining healthy relationships, and getting involved in social activities all add up to healthy and successful outcomes. Health and wellness of college students increases their academic success!

bewell.usc.edu