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Active Campuses

Integrating Sports and Physical
Activity in India's Higher Education
Institutions

Issue Brief #6



Building the case for Active Campuses in India

There is a growing awareness and advocacy for the inclusion of more structured sports and physical activity (SAPA) approaches within higher education institutions (HEIs) in India. This movement is driven by concerns over student health and well-being, especially considering the increasing stress and lifestyle-related health issues among students. Early initiatives by the government and various accreditation bodies encourage SAPA, recognizing its benefits for student development, health, and its role as an engine of India's future socio-economic growth. Nonetheless, making SAPA a core component of the higher education experience in India would require policy changes and investment across several areas, including infrastructure, curriculum changes, and capacity building.

Today, many students enrolled in HEIs do not engage in regular SAPA. As of 2021-22, around 43 million Indians, predominantly aged 18 to 30, were enrolled in HEIs.¹ The shift from school to university often represents a significant change in lifestyle and daily routines, impacting a student's engagement in structured SAPA. In many schools, SAPA is a mandatory part of the curriculum (although not always enforced), allowing at least a basic level of participation and enabling them to

reap its well-documented and wide-ranging benefits. However, upon entering HEIs, this formal structure dissipates further, and SAPA becomes optional at the same time when new barriers to participation emerge. This can lead to a decline in engagement - from already relatively inadequate levels (with over 70% inactive adolescents)² - in regular SAPA among many students.

This trend is highlighted in several studies, although the topic does not appear to have been deeply researched. The research by the Indian Council of Medical Research across four states - one each from the south, west, east, and north of India respectively - is instructive. It found that 87% of respondents aged 20-29 years (including those who attended HEIs), engaged in no recreational physical activities.³ Another study in Tamil Nadu reported that over 75% of university students were physically inactive, with female students exhibiting three times the inactivity rates of their male peers.⁴ Similarly, a study at Banaras Hindu University noted that the integration of physical education and health varies significantly across different academic streams, indicating that these aspects are "*inadequately and heterogeneously represented in university curricula.*"⁵

This can be attributed to several factors, including the institutional environment,

¹ <https://aishe.gov.in/aishe/viewDocument.action?documentId=353>

² https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/country-profiles/physical-activity/physical-activity-ind-2022-country-profile.pdf?sfvrsn=4208cb78_5&download=true

³ Anjana, Ranjit M., Rajendra Pradeepa, Ashok K. Das, Mohan Deepa, Anil Bhansali, Shashank R. Joshi, Prashant P. Joshi et al. "Physical activity and inactivity patterns in India—results from the ICMR-INDIAB study (Phase-1)[ICMR-INDIAB-5]." *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* 11 (2014): 1-11.

⁴ Praveen Kumar, S., D. Lakshmi Priya, and A. Viknesh Ambayiram. "Level of physical activity among university students in urban Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu—a cross sectional study." *Saudi J Med* 6, no. 8 (2021): 233-40.

⁵ Verma AK, Singh G, Patwardhan K. Patterns of Physical Activity Among University Students and Their Perceptions About the Curricular Content Concerned With Health: Cross-sectional Study. *JMIRx Med.* 2022 Apr 29;3(2):e31521. doi: 10.2196/31521. PMID: 37725547; PMCID: PMC10414421.

academic pressure, and lifestyle choices. First, academic pressures often intensify in HEIs, with students facing a more rigorous study schedule, competitive environment, and increased expectations for performance. The demands of coursework, exams, internships, and projects create significant time constraints, leading to physical and mental exhaustion that can sideline SAPA engagement. Furthermore, many students living away from home for the first time are in control of their daily schedules and lifestyle choices, which may not prioritize health and fitness. Coupled with increased reliance on food not cooked in the home and irregular eating habits, these factors collectively contribute to a sedentary lifestyle.

Additionally, while some HEIs have sports facilities and clubs, participation is almost always voluntary. Students with no pre-

existing habit of engaging in sports or who do not feel an immediate social or personal compulsion to participate might never visit these facilities. The lack of mandatory physical education classes as part of the university curriculum further contributes to the reduced levels of SAPA. This reduction in activity not only affects students' physical health, leading to increased incidences of lifestyle diseases, but also impacts their mental well-being, stress levels, and overall academic and personal performance.

Promoting SAPA in HEIs in India can yield substantial benefits for the students, the institutions themselves, and the wider society. These cut across various dimensions from physical and mental health to improved academic performance and embedding sustainable lifestyle habits. A summary of potential benefits is in the table below.

Table 1: Potential benefits of SAPA to students, HEIs, and society-at-large

Categories	Benefits
Individual	<i>Student health and well-being:</i> Reduces the risk of chronic diseases like obesity, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, depression, and anxiety.
	<i>Academic performance:</i> Correlation between physical fitness and improved brain function, including enhanced concentration, memory, and problem-solving abilities.
	<i>Soft skills:</i> Teamwork, leadership, and communication skills.
	<i>Long-term healthy habits:</i> Instills lifelong habits for an active lifestyle.
	<i>Mental health:</i> Provides an outlet for stress, promotes relaxation, releases endorphins, and improves mood.
Institutional	<i>Vibrant campus culture:</i> Fosters energetic and vibrant campus culture and enhances the overall campus experience.
	<i>Reputation:</i> Investing in SAPA infrastructure and culture can significantly enhance an institution's competitiveness and reputation. A vibrant campus life enriched by robust SAPA programs can attract prospective students, and retain current ones.

	<i>Economic benefits:</i> More physically active students can lead to universities having better retention rates. ⁶ Active students are also more confident of finding a job after graduation ⁷ .
Societal	<i>Reducing healthcare costs:</i> A healthier, physically active youth population lowers healthcare costs ⁸ .
	<i>Productivity:</i> Active lifestyles promoted by HEIs can lead to higher workplace productivity post graduation. Employees who are physically active have lower healthcare costs, require less sick leave, and are more productive at work ⁹ .
	<i>Sustainability:</i> Embeds an ethic of active, healthy, and sustainable living across the population.

⁶ Prial A, Zhu X, Bol L, Williams MR. The impact of moderate physical activity and student interaction on retention at a community college. J Am Coll Health. 2023 Jan;71(1):154-161. doi: 10.1080/07448481.2021.1881103. Epub 2021 Mar 18. PMID: 33734951.

⁷ <https://www.bucs.org.uk/static/c42d7259-5679-4c3a-aa44c439044a15ff/The-value-of-university-sport-and-physical-activity.pdf>

⁸ Su, Chun-Lang MDa,b,c; Wang, Lee PhDa; Ho, Chien-Chang PhDe,g; Nfor, Oswald Ndi DVM, PhDa; Hsu, Shu-Yi MSa; Lee, Chun-Te PhDb,d; Ko, Pei-Chieh MSa; Lin, Yi-Tien PhDf; Liaw, Yung-Po PhDa,h,*. Physical activity is associated with lower health care costs among Taiwanese individuals with diabetes mellitus. Medicine 99(14):p e19613, April 2020. | DOI: 10.1097/MD.00000000000019613

⁹ <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/2023-06/whrn-pa.pdf>

What are Active Campuses?

Active campuses focus on optimizing SAPA among students by creating an enabling environment through proactive institutional initiatives. While there is no universal definition of active campuses, their common feature is that they create an environment that encourages SAPA engagement and systematically integrates SAPA programs into their institutional structure, design and academic framework. They implement programs that are designed to enhance students' physical and mental well-being, seeing these as core aspects of personal development and success. This includes implementing evidence-based interventions to decrease sedentary time and increase overall SAPA levels. Several college-aged

students may be at risk for declining activity levels during their transition into emerging adulthood.¹⁰ By investing in suitable infrastructure and adopting policies that support an active lifestyle, active campuses can create a culture that views engagement in SAPA as fundamental to educational experiences and life skills, thereby improving cognitive functions, social capabilities, and effectiveness. Overall, the shift from traditional to active HEIs represents a modern understanding of the integral role of SAPA in developing well-rounded individuals who excel academically and in their personal and social lives.

Table 2: Main differences between a traditional and active HEI

Aspect	Traditional	Active
Focus	Primarily emphasizes academic achievements, research output, and intellectual development, positioning physical activity as optional.	Holistic approach emphasizing physical, mental, and social benefits of SAPA. Recognizes SAPA as pivotal to well-being and success.
Infrastructure	Limited facilities, often prioritized for competitive athletes. Restricted access for the wider student body.	Provides inclusive facilities aimed at encouraging physical activity among all students and staff.
Programs and initiatives	Ad hoc physical activity initiatives. Lack of comprehensive, institution-wide strategy to promote regular participation.	Structured programs integrated into student life, with supportive policies promoting healthy lifestyles and regular activity.
Community engagement	Engagement within SAPA can be more niche, focusing on segments like inter-university competitions, reflecting a competitive spirit.	Promotes a campus-wide culture of inclusivity in SAPA, enhancing community cohesion and overall student engagement.
Innovation, accessibility	Often lacking technological integration and innovation in SAPA programs.	Incorporates new technologies and innovative practices to increase participation and accessibility in SAPA.

¹⁰ Jacqueline, D., Van, Hoomissen., Andrew, Downs. (2021). Physical Activity as an Integral Part of Overall Wellness in the College/Emerging-Adult Population. 109-121. doi: 10.1007/978-3-030-60043-3_9

Landscape of SAPA in Indian HEIs



Policies

India's national policy landscape concerning SAPA in HEIs is guided by several national strategies to foster a culture of physical wellness and academic balance. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 promotes an integrative approach that includes sports as essential to holistic education, aiming to enhance student wellness and develop vital life skills such as teamwork and self-discipline. Similarly, the National Sports Policy 2001 mandates the integration of sports into educational curricula and stresses the development of sports infrastructures to facilitate widespread sports participation. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council Manual for Self-Study Report for General Institutions, notes the following criteria on SAPA in HEIs¹¹:

- **Facilities for SAPA:** Institutions need to upload data on facilities for cultural activities, yoga, games (indoor and outdoor), and sports, including details about size, establishment year, and user rate.
- **Systems and procedures:** Institutions should describe and upload data on systems and procedures for maintaining and utilizing physical, academic, and support facilities, such as sports complexes and classrooms.
- **Student achievements:** Institutions must report and upload data on the number of awards or medals won by students for sports and cultural activities at inter-

university, state, national, or international events over the past five years.

- **Organized events:** Institutions should upload data on the average number of sports and cultural events or competitions organized annually.

Policies like those from the Sports Authority of India, the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), and the University Grants Commission (UGC) are crucial in supporting university-level sports. These bodies provide financial support and coordinate activities essential for developing competitive sports and physical education. The AIU, partially funded by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, plays a pivotal role in promoting sports within the university sector across India. Acting as a National Sports Promotion Organization, the AIU is dedicated to fostering sports among its member universities and maintaining high standards of athletic excellence. One of the primary functions of the AIU's Sports Division is to serve as the Inter University Sports Board, focusing on the development of competitive sports¹².

The UGC provides guidelines and grants for developing sports infrastructure and equipment in HEIs¹³. These initiatives focus primarily on competitive sports, aiming to develop professional athletes. Grants are often based on students' past sports performance and primarily assist with creating infrastructure and equipment for elite sports development. Recent UGC guidelines also emphasize physical fitness and activity for student well-being, promoting the

¹¹ <http://naac.gov.in/index.php/en/67-manuals>

¹² <https://aiu.ac.in/sports.php>

¹³ University Grants Commission, Guidelines for Development of Sports Infrastructure and Equipment in Universities and Colleges (2012-2017), https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/6450102_English-Guidelines-of-Sports.pdf.

development of sports facilities and supportive environments on campuses¹⁴. However, the focus on competitive sports by entities such as AIU and UGC highlights the need for more equitable SAPA access for all.

In addition, initiatives like the Khelo India Program and Fit India Movement target, among other priorities, the inclusion of sports and SAPA within HEIs, enhancing infrastructure and fostering a sports culture at all academic levels. These initiatives are crucial in bridging the gap between grassroots sports and higher competitive levels, providing platforms for nurturing talent and promoting physical fitness as a core component of student life.

While national policies set a broad framework, the implementation of SAPA must consider the diverse nature of Indian HEIs. For example, there are significant differences between residential and non-residential campuses with respect to SAPA integration. Residential programs can embed comprehensive daily activity programs, whereas non-residential programs (such as distance-learning) may need flexible schedules and accessible off-campus facilities to engage their students effectively. Additionally, vocational institutes and other types of educational institutions require tailored approaches to ensure equitable access to SAPA. Limited data on these different types of campuses and their infrastructure poses a challenge, but acknowledging these distinctions is crucial for developing effective strategies. A more differentiated approach is necessary to address the unique needs of various HEIs, ensuring that all students benefit from the promotion of physical activity and sports.

Despite these national efforts, there are emerging gaps that need to be addressed. There is a notable disparity between the availability of sports facilities and their actual utilization by students, with a small percentage actively engaging in available SAPA programs. This underutilization points towards a need for increased student awareness and motivation, improved access to quality facilities, and integration of SAPA into the daily curriculum to ensure higher participation rates.

State-level sports policies in India are crucial for promoting SAPA within HEIs. Each state can tailor its approach by leveraging existing resources and practices, such as traditional sports disciplines, and developing programs that resonate with the HEIs in that region. This includes building and maintaining the required sports facilities, integrating SAPA into student life, and providing accessible equipment and training. These steps can ensure that students benefit from familiar resources, promoting well-being and an active lifestyle. Continued investment in sports infrastructure and inclusive educational practices is essential for nurturing a vibrant sports culture within India's HEIs.

State-level sports policies in India, such as Haryana's Sports and Physical Fitness Policy (2015), Gujarat's Sports Policy (2022-27), Maharashtra's Sports Policy (2012), and Kerala's Physical Education and Sports Policy (2012), aim to increase sports participation and excellence within HEIs. Haryana has focused on physical literacy, incorporating sports into daily routines, and building high-quality infrastructure. Gujarat has sought to address governance, infrastructure, private

¹⁴ University Grants Commission, Guidelines for the Promotion of Physical Fitness, Sports, Students' Health, Welfare, Psychological and Emotional Wellbeing in HEIs, https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/9666273_Guidelines-for-students-health.pdf.

sector participation, and grassroots promotion, with plans for new sports schools and complexes, supported by Swarnim Gujarat Sports University. Maharashtra has promoted sports through infrastructure development, public-private partnerships, and support for indigenous sports, offering scholarships for excellence. Kerala has emphasized enhanced training facilities and integrating physical education within the curriculum, intending to ensure inclusivity and state-of-the-art facilities for all students.

Despite a comprehensive policy framework on paper, implementation within HEIs is often lagging. Inconsistent funding, inadequate infrastructure, and administrative barriers hinder progress. Enhancing student engagement, capacity building, and regular monitoring are crucial to realizing these policies' potential. Robust enabling mechanisms are needed to translate policy into practice effectively.



Infrastructure

The data on the availability of sports and health-related infrastructure in HEIs across India highlights significant disparities among universities, colleges, and stand-alone institutions. Playgrounds are mostly uniformly accessible across all institution types with high percentages, indicating a strong presence of outdoor sports facilities. However, critical infrastructure such as health centers and gymnasiums/fitness centers show considerable variation. Universities are well-equipped with health centers and gym facilities (81% and 80%, respectively), but

these facilities are notably less prevalent in colleges (49% and 41%) and stand-alone institutions (55% and 33%). This gap suggests that students in non-university institutions may have limited access to essential health and fitness resources.

Further disparities are evident in the availability of indoor stadiums and overall campus friendliness, with universities again taking the lead in providing these facilities. The lower availability of indoor stadiums in colleges and stand-alone institutions (35% and 33%, respectively) restricts opportunities for indoor sports and activities, which are vital during adverse weather conditions. Similarly, the concept of 'campus friendliness', which likely encompasses various student-centric amenities, is higher in universities (84%) compared to colleges (61%) and stand-alone institutions (59%).

These gaps highlight the need for targeted improvements in non-university institutions to enhance the overall student experience and support their physical and mental well-being, underscoring the importance of equitable investment in educational infrastructure to ensure all students benefit from a supportive and health-promoting environment. It is essential to remember that new HEIs have the advantage of incorporating SAPA-friendly designs from the outset, including state-of-the-art facilities and strategic layout planning. Existing HEIs, on the other hand, face the challenge of retrofitting older infrastructure. Both scenarios require tailored strategies to maximize the impact of SAPA programs and support student well-being.

Table 3: SAPA-related infrastructure in Indian HEIs¹⁵

Initiative	University	College	Stand-alone
Overview			
Number	1,162	42,825	10,576
Availability of SAPA infrastructure (% of institutions with...)			
Playground	91	95	91
Health center	81	49	55
Gym/ fitness center	80	41	33
Indoor stadium	56	35	33
Campus-friendly	84	61	59
Skill-development center	71	57	58

¹⁵ <https://aishe.gov.in/aishe/viewDocument.action?documentId=353>

Barriers and Challenges

The decline in SAPA engagement commonly experienced by many students once they enrol in HEIs is a multi-faceted and complex issue. The primary onus is on students to prioritize and integrate SAPA into their schedules. Many find it challenging to do so amidst adjusting to

a new environment, peer pressure, and academic demands. Barriers to SAPA engagement among students in HEIs can be categorized into three broad themes—personal, social, and environmental:

16

Table 4: Summary of barriers to SAPA in Indian HEIs

Personal	Social	Environmental
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lack of awareness:</i> Lack of knowledge about practical, quick routines for all fitness levels • <i>Psychological:</i> Procrastination, boredom, inertia, lack of self-discipline, and low self-efficacy can lead to low motivation. • <i>Time constraints:</i> Academic pressures and new responsibilities might lead to less time for participation in SAPA. • <i>Health-related:</i> Fatigue, physical ailments, stress, and poor diet can lower SAPA engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Social attitudes:</i> Cultural norms prioritize academics over fitness • <i>Gender:</i> Gender roles and economic-cultural and regional factors, with girls in rural areas facing more restrictions, and girls in urban areas engaging more in sedentary activities. • <i>Peer pressure:</i> Negative peer influence and fear of embarrassment deter participation in SAPA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Accessibility/infrastructure</i> Limited space, insufficient facilities, safety concerns, and financial barriers, particularly for female and economically disadvantaged students. • <i>Safety:</i> Crime and traffic may deter outdoor activities, especially for female students, necessitating improved campus safety measures. • <i>Technology overuse:</i> Excessive screen time reduces physical activity, disrupts sleep, and affects cognitive health.

Addressing these barriers will require a concerted effort from educational institutions, policymakers, students, and society.

¹⁶ Anjali, Sabharwal M. Perceived Barriers of Young Adults for Participation in Physical Activity. *Curr Res Nutr Food Sci* 2018;6(2). doi : <http://dx.doi.org/10.12944/CRNFSJ.6.2.18>

Global experiences and learnings

Global and national initiatives have recognized the importance of integrating SAPA into HEIs to improve the health and well-being of students on and off the campuses.¹⁷ Organizations like the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in the United States, the British Universities & Colleges Sport (BUCS) in the UK, and UniSport Australia emphasize a holistic approach to student health, incorporating physical, mental, and social dimensions. Initiatives like the International University Sports Federation's (FISU) Healthy Campus program aim to enhance health, nutrition, and sustainability, fostering overall student well-being. Key takeaways from these global initiatives reveal how HEIs can tackle barriers to integrating SAPA:



Holistic and inclusive approaches

Programs like FISU's Healthy Campus and the University of British Columbia's Wellbeing Strategic Framework adopt comprehensive strategies that go beyond SAPA to include mental health support, nutritional guidance, and social responsibility. These holistic approaches make SAPA more appealing and beneficial to a broader student base.



Facilitating accessibility and engagement

To overcome infrastructural barriers, HEIs are developing facilities that cater to a wide range

of activities and skill levels. The University of Birmingham's Active Residences program focuses on making SAPA accessible to all students, including beginners and those with varying interests, thereby enhancing participation rates. The Canadian Intramural Recreation Association encourages, promotes, and develops active living, healthy lifestyles, and personal growth through intramural and recreational programs within the education and recreation communities.



Leveraging community and partnerships

Some HEIs use community involvement to enhance SAPA integration. Collaborative approaches, such as the University of East London's Active Trails and the University of Northampton's Active Campus Projects support partnerships with local organizations, to provide dynamic, diverse, and community-oriented activities.



Technology and innovation

Innovation and technology enhance the opportunities for student SAPA engagement. Initiatives by the National University of Singapore employed innovative practices (such as gamification) to promote engagement in SAPA. Additionally, creative practices like the pop-up skate park at the University of East London create engaging and diverse SAPA opportunities.

¹⁷Annexure 1 provides a table summarizing a few national and institution-level initiatives that focus on integrating SAPA into HEIs.

Preliminary framework for Active Campuses

The main stakeholders for this framework include HEI administrators and leaders who play a critical role in decision-making. As such, our preliminary framework is tailored toward them and focuses on choices and trade-offs they are likely to face. Other stakeholders are also of course important from a design and delivery perspective. The government acts as both an enabler and a funder, providing

essential support and resources. The private sector increasingly contributes through sponsorships, partnerships in facility development, and investment in health and wellness programs. Additionally, community organizations and civil society organizations (CSOs) are vital as they bring community insights, facilitate grassroots engagement, and can help drive local support for initiatives.

Table 5: Key stakeholders for Active Campuses

Actor	Role	Actions (not exhaustive)
HEI administrators	Decision-making, design, and delivery of SAPA programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement and enforce SAPA policies • Allocate resources for SAPA initiatives • Monitor and assess program effectiveness
Government	Regulation, mandates, expertise, and funding. Providing linkages for athlete development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive legislation for sports education including mandates, standards, etc. • Institutional mechanism to oversee SAPA integration and hold HEIs accountable • Grants and subsidies for sports facilities • Landscape analysis of access to and condition of basic SAPA facilities • Active campus initiatives for transport and internal commute • Program development • Athlete support
Private sector	Funding and resource provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor sports events, competitions and facilities • Partner in research and development of health programs • Provide technological support for SAPA integration
Community organizations	Community engagement and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate community sports events • Outreach and educational campaigns • Engage local talent in HEI programs

CSOs	Awareness initiatives and grassroots engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for supportive governmental policies • Facilitate deeper connections with communities, integrate local sports clubs, community centers, and resources • Assist in fundraising, resource allocation
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At the highest level, the vision for Active Campuses is as follows: *“A healthy, fit, empowered, and productive student body through comprehensive and tailored SAPA programs and opportunities for sporting excellence.”* This statement underscores the commitment to holistic student development within HEIs. It recognizes the integral role of physical and mental well-being in academic and life success. By offering tailored SAPA programs and fostering environments that prioritize health and athletic excellence, this vision aims to cultivate a well-rounded, empowered student populace capable of achieving high performance both in and outside the classroom. This approach not only enhances individual student outcomes but also contributes to a vibrant, dynamic educational community.

This vision requires catering to diverse student profiles—sedentary students, active students, and student-athletes—each requiring tailored approaches:

Sedentary Students: These students often lack motivation and awareness of physical activity’s benefits. They need campaigns highlighting its lifelong mental, academic, and physical advantages. Additionally, they require easy, non-intimidating access to activities that need minimal experience and offer immediate

success, thereby fostering initial engagement and promoting sustained participation.

Active Students: These students typically seek a range of SAPA that matches their interests and ability levels. They need access to diverse and well-maintained facilities. Additionally, they benefit from environments that offer social and competitive opportunities, which help maintain their interest and involvement in physical activities.

Student-athletes: These students have advanced needs including access to high-quality training facilities that meet the standards for competitive sports. They require specialized coaching and comprehensive health and performance support services like advanced nutrition and injury management. Crucially, they also need academic programs that are flexible enough to accommodate their rigorous training schedules and competition travel, ensuring they can pursue both athletic and academic goals without compromise.

Thus, the framework should incorporate certain principles across its components to ensure it is relevant and action-oriented, focusing on scalability across different institution types and ensuring inclusivity. This approach not only boosts individual outcomes but also strengthens the overall educational ecosystem, making HEIs vibrant and dynamic spaces for all students. Table 6 highlights 4 principles.

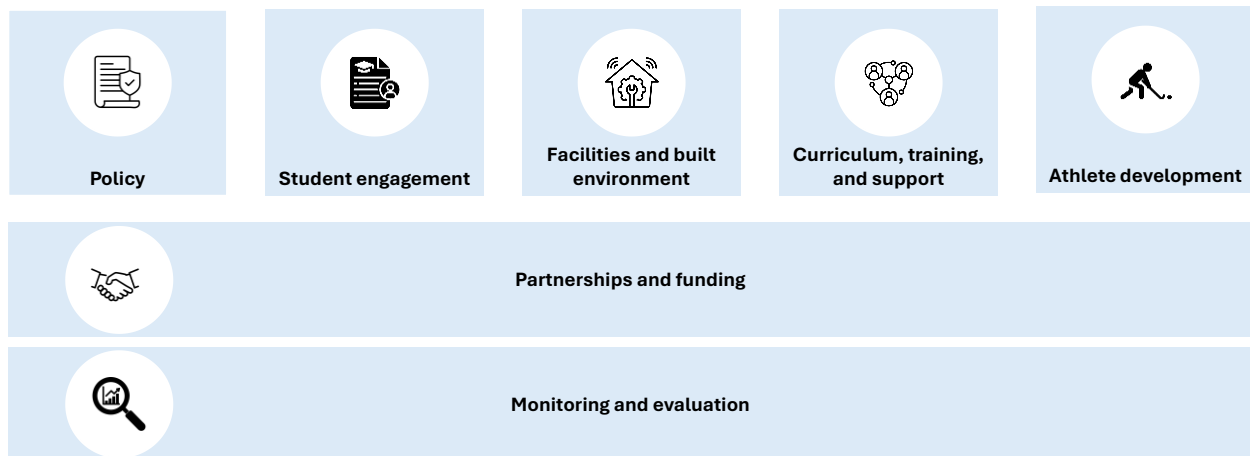
Table 6: Design principles

Principle	Rationale	Examples
Separate but universal	Ensures universal SAPA access while catering to diverse institutional and student needs across India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement baseline SAPA for all • Offer specialized pathways for athletes • Focus on local sports in rural areas and technology-driven programs in urban settings
Sustainable	Promotes long-term viability of SAPA without constant re-investment, using eco-friendly and cost-effective methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with local businesses for resources • Integrate SAPA with national health initiatives • Create endowments for facility maintenance • Integrate SAPA with health initiatives
Collaborative and engaged	Enhances SAPA relevance through stakeholder involvement and community integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form multi-stakeholder committees • Collaborate with NGOs for community sports events • Engage local figures and health workers in SAPA planning
Supportive	Focuses on building stakeholder capacity to deliver quality SAPA, with additional support for marginalized groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train PE faculty and coaches with international expertise • Establish mentorship for female students • Integrate SAPA with broader health and wellness programs

At its core, the framework for Active Campuses (as shown below) comprises 7 priority action areas, two of which are cross-cutting. Together, it aims to outline a holistic and flexible approach to integrating SAPA into the fabric of

HEIs in India and create a supportive environment that not only enhances physical well-being but also promotes academic and personal development among students.

Figure 1: Framework components



In Table 7 we explore each of the action areas with respect to their objectives, examples of potential actions and initiatives (with an emphasis on innovative interventions), and examples of potential indicators that may be used for monitoring and tracking purposes.

Table 7: Framework details

Objectives	Actions (selected)	Indicators (selected)
Policy		
<p><i>Establishes a foundation of supportive policies to mandate and facilitate the integration of SAPA across all HEIs</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Comprehensive SAPA policies:</i> Develop and integrate SAPA into HEI policies • <i>SAPA policy workshops:</i> Conduct workshops for HEI administrators to develop and refine SAPA policies, ensuring alignment with national health and education guidelines • <i>Annual SAPA audit:</i> Implement an annual audit to assess the effectiveness of existing SAPA policies and make necessary adjustments • <i>Cross-sector policy forums:</i> Establish forums involving education, health, and sports sectors to integrate SAPA policies more holistically across disciplines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Number of SAPA-related policies</i> • <i>Quality of policies:</i> Level of detail and clarity in SAPA policies regarding goals, implementation strategies, and responsible parties • <i>Degree of Alignment:</i> Alignment with national health and education standards • <i>Workshops Conducted:</i> Number of workshops held annually for HEI and percentage of all HEIs participating in the workshops. • <i>Audit Score (or) Pass Rate:</i> Percentage of HEIs passing the annual audit assessing SAPA policy effectiveness. • <i>Policy Forums:</i> Number of cross-sector forums conducted annually to integrate SAPA policies across

		education, health, and sports sectors.
Student engagement		
<i>Emphasizes deep student involvement in SAPA, adapting to their needs, enhancing awareness, and blending fun with incentives to boost long-term engagement. Essentially enhance student involvement by creating a demand and culture for SAPA.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Student SAPA ambassadors:</i> Develop a student ambassador program to promote SAPA activities and gather peer feedback • <i>Innovative engagement apps:</i> Launch mobile apps that use gamification to track student participation and offer rewards • <i>Awareness:</i> Run campaigns highlighting the benefits of SAPA and success stories. • <i>Virtual fitness challenges:</i> Organize campus-wide virtual fitness challenges to encourage participation regardless of students' physical location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ambassador Program Participation:</i> Number of students participating as SAPA ambassadors and peer feedback collected. • <i>App Usage:</i> Number of active users and engagement levels on the mobile app. • <i>Challenge Participation:</i> Number of students participating in virtual fitness challenges and completion rates.
Facilities and built environment		
<i>Emphasizes the design, development, and maintenance of accessible and inclusive physical/hybrid infrastructure to support SAPA, including low resource/leveraged models, and the creation of an environment that promotes active living.</i>	<p>SAPA-Focused Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Eco-friendly SAPA complexes:</i> Build or renovate facilities using sustainable materials and energy-efficient designs. • <i>Multi-use fitness gyms:</i> Create small, scattered fitness gyms around the campus that are equipped with basic workout and relaxation tools. • <i>Sports facility upgrades:</i> Enhance existing SAPA facilities to include state-of-the-art equipment and resources. <p>Built Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Walkability and Transit Solutions:</i> Develop pedestrian paths, cycling lanes, and transit options to minimize reliance on motorized vehicles. • <i>Accessible Design Audits:</i> Regularly audit facilities to ensure they are accessible to all students, including those with disabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sustainable Facilities:</i> Number of sports complexes built or renovated using sustainable materials and energy-efficient designs, and utilization rates of upgraded sports facilities. • <i>Accessibility Compliance:</i> Percentage of facilities passing accessibility audits. • <i>Fitness Gym Utilization:</i> Number of fitness gyms installed and their usage rates. • <i>Active Living Environment:</i> Length and quality of pedestrian and cycling paths. Student satisfaction and usage rates of green spaces and transit solutions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Green Spaces:</i> Incorporate green spaces and outdoor activity areas to encourage regular SAPA. 	
Curriculum, training, and support		
<p><i>Enhance institutional capacity for high-quality SAPA by embedding it in the curriculum, improving teacher training, and expanding essential health services.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Interdisciplinary SAPA courses:</i> Develop courses that integrate physical education with health sciences, psychology, and nutrition. • <i>Professional Development Retreats:</i> Offer retreats for faculty focusing on the latest athletic training and health education methods. • <i>Support Network Integration:</i> Incorporate access to counseling and medical services as part of the athletic training curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Course Enrolment:</i> Number of students enrolled in interdisciplinary SAPA courses. • <i>Faculty Participation:</i> Number of faculty attending professional development retreats. • <i>Support Services Usage:</i> Utilization rates of counseling and medical services integrated into the athletic training curriculum.
Athlete development		
<p><i>Nurture talented athletes by providing pathways to excel in sports.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Collaborations with Local Sports Clubs and Associations:</i> Partner with local sports clubs and academies to increase access to specialized training. • <i>Shared Facility Agreements:</i> Enter agreements with community centers, other schools, or sports organizations to use their facilities. • <i>Customized Training Technologies:</i> Use advanced sports analytics and wearable technologies to create customized training programs. • <i>Career Transition Programs:</i> Establish programs to help athletes transition to other careers post-competition, emphasizing skills transfer and professional development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Collaborations:</i> Improvement in athlete performance metrics and feedback from specialized training programs. • <i>Shared Facility:</i> Increased efficiency and utilization rates of shared facilities, measured by athlete training hours and facility usage reports. • <i>Customized Training:</i> Enhanced athlete performance and reduction in injury rates due to the use of advanced training technologies. • <i>Transition Program Participation:</i> Percentage of athletes successfully transitioning to new careers post-competition, tracked through employment rates and job satisfaction surveys.
Partnerships and funding		
<p><i>Establish robust funding models and partnerships</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Corporate sponsorship programs:</i> Develop strategic partnerships with sports brands and health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Corporate Sponsorship Programs:</i> Amount of funding and in-kind support received from corporate

<p><i>for enhancing SAPA at HEIs</i></p>	<p>companies for funding and in-kind support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Community sports events:</i> Collaborate with local communities to host sports events that also serve as fundraising opportunities • <i>Alumni funding networks:</i> Leverage alumni networks to establish dedicated funds for SAPA initiatives. 	<p>sponsors; number of strategic partnerships established.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Community Sports Events:</i> Funds raised through community sports events; level of community participation and engagement. • <i>Alumni Funding Networks:</i> Amount of funds raised through alumni networks; number of active alumni contributors to SAPA initiatives.
<p>Monitoring and evaluation</p>		
<p><i>Establish robust mechanisms for regular health and wellness assessments and continuous improvement of SAPA programs.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Wellness check-ins:</i> Implement these during admission and at regular intervals. Integrate periodic physical and mental health evaluations and use the data to tailor SAPA programs as a prescription for improvement. • <i>Real-time feedback:</i> Implement systems to collect and analyze real-time feedback from students and staff on SAPA initiatives • <i>Annual impact reports:</i> Produce comprehensive annual reports detailing the outcomes and impacts of SAPA programs • <i>Benchmarking with other HEIs:</i> Regularly compare SAPA program outcomes with other institutions to identify areas for improvement and share best practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Real-Time Feedback:</i> Volume and quality of feedback received from students and staff; implementation rate of actionable insights from feedback. • <i>Annual Impact Reports:</i> Number of annual impact reports produced; measurable outcomes and impacts highlighted in reports. • <i>Benchmarking with Other HEIs:</i> Number of benchmarking studies conducted; improvements identified and implemented based on comparative analysis with other institutions.

To transform HEIs into hubs that equally prioritize physical and mental health alongside academic excellence, a dynamic, multi-pronged strategy is essential. This strategy should focus on upgrading infrastructure, enacting comprehensive policy reforms, and shifting cultural attitudes toward health promotion. The objective is clear: provide clear, actionable steps for immediate and sustained impact, benefiting the entire academic community. Success hinges on a

collaborative effort across government, educational bodies, and the community. By uniting these forces, we can cultivate HEIs that not only achieve academic success but also enhance the well-being of students and staff. Moving forward, such cooperation is key to fostering environments where physical education and mental health are as prioritized as academic achievements, paving the way for a healthier future.

Annexure I

Initiative	Description	Insights and key lessons
Global and national-level initiatives		
International University Sports Federation (FISU): Healthy Campus Program¹⁸	<p><i>Global reach:</i> Healthy Campus involves 130 universities across 39 countries.</p> <p><i>Holistic focus:</i> Developed using global best practices, covering SAPA, mental health, nutrition, disease prevention, risk behavior, environmental responsibility, and sustainability.</p> <p><i>Comprehensive strategy:</i> Integrates diverse health aspects to enhance student well-being.</p>	<p><i>Purpose-driven design:</i> The program is meticulously crafted to enhance health and well-being across universities.</p> <p><i>Knowledge exchange:</i> Facilitates sharing of successful health practices from various global contexts.</p> <p><i>Interdisciplinary and holistic:</i> Emphasizes SAPA by integrating diverse health aspects within the higher education framework.</p>
United States: The National Collegiate Athletic Association Initiatives (NCAA)	<p><i>Mental health and Wellbeing:</i> NCAA focuses on student-athlete well-being by integrating comprehensive mental health services and resources.</p> <p><i>Pathways for sports development:</i> The NCAA sponsors competitive sports, promotes physical activity as a core component of university life and provides opportunities for student-athletes for sports development.</p>	<p><i>Enhancing college sports ecosystem:</i> Focuses on holistic development and recognizes the growth of the college sports ecosystem as one of its key priorities.¹⁹</p> <p><i>Multi-pronged approach:</i> Their approach enables athlete development and helps inspire youth by ensuring adequate support and training.</p> <p><i>Long-term outlook:</i> Programs also support student-athlete's transition and maintain active lifestyles after graduation.</p>
United Kingdom: British Universities & Colleges Sport (BUCS) Programs	<p><i>Collaboration:</i> BUCS collaborates with universities to develop facilities and opportunities for both competitive and recreational physical activities.</p> <p><i>Diverse benefits:</i> Recognizes the importance of sports in unlocking multifaceted benefits for students including improvement in overall well-being, education attainment as well as employment.²⁰</p>	<p><i>Broad Vision:</i> Aims to conduct competitions and popularize sports at all levels including encouraging volunteering.</p> <p><i>Integrated Approach:</i> Advocates for the integration of SAPA into student life to improve physical and mental health, including initiatives like "Take a Stand" focusing on inclusivity in sports.</p>
Australia: UniSport Australia's	<p><i>Multi-sport competitions:</i> The Initiative brings together universities across the nations in a multi-sport competition.</p> <p><i>Cultural Transformation:</i> The event aims for a cultural transformation</p>	<p><i>Campus-wide initiatives:</i> Universities often have comprehensive sports and fitness programs, including fitness classes, outdoor adventures, and wellness workshops, embedded within their</p>

¹⁸ <https://www.fisu.net/programmes/healthy-campus/>

¹⁹ <https://www.ncaa.org/sports/2021/6/28/mission-and-priorities.aspx>

²⁰ <https://www.bucs.org.uk/static/c42d7259-5679-4c3a-aa44c439044a15ff/The-value-of-university-sport-and-physical-activity.pdf>

Nationals and Health Promotion	targeting competitive sports as well as SAPA culture.	campuses. <i>Encouraging student interactions:</i> The event brings together students from various sports disciplines.
Institution-level Initiatives		
University of British Columbia, Okanagan²¹, Canada	<p><i>Stakeholder recognition and cooperation:</i> The Wellbeing Strategy Framework²² recognizes students, faculty, staff, and the community as important stakeholders.</p> <p><i>Integrated Framework:</i> The framework outlines components for the holistic development of an active and healthy campus including food and nutrition, social connection, and collaborative leadership.</p>	<p><i>Inclusive Participation:</i> The framework is thoughtfully designed to emphasize on inclusivity, encouraging student participation regardless of their ability.</p> <p><i>Sustainable Practices:</i> The practices promote long-term well-being and environmental responsibility, aligning physical activity programs with broader sustainability goals.</p>
National University of Singapore (NUS)²³	<p><i>Lifestyle and Habits:</i> The initiative targets active lifestyles and habits such as dining habits and improving sleep habits along with SAPA for health promotion.</p> <p><i>Encourages innovation:</i> Interested stakeholders within the university ecosystem including the staff and the students are eligible to apply.</p>	<p><i>Mentorship and Guidance:</i> The initiative ensures provisions for mentorship in addition to funding for interested stakeholders.</p> <p><i>Gamification:</i> As a part of the NUS SG Bicentennial Challenge²⁴, NUS partnered up with organizations to promote healthy lifestyles through games and incentives.</p>
University of East London	<p><i>Holistic development:</i> The Active Trails and Active Journey Programs offer a range of free activities designed to enhance mind, body, and spirit, including mindful movement, fitness classes, and well-being walks.</p> <p><i>Inspiring innovation:</i> The program also features a pop-up skate park, designed by university students and sports scholars.</p>	<p><i>Safe and welcoming environments:</i> Additions such as colorful graphics and motivational signage around the mile-long trail The program contributes to a SAPA-friendly environment.</p> <p><i>Optimal utilization:</i> Initiatives such as the pop-up skate park and campus trail provide a great example of optimal utilization of spaces within the campuses to promote SAPA.</p> <p><i>Collaborative design:</i> Through vital collaborations with community organizations, the skate park offers a vibrant environment for skaters of all skill levels, featuring expert coaching and creative workshops.</p>

²¹ <https://wellbeing.ubc.ca/physical-activity>

²² https://wellbeing.ubc.ca/sites/wellbeing.ubc.ca/files/u9/wellbeing_strategic_framework_FINAL_0.pdf

²³ <https://nus.edu.sg/hwb/hci-funding/>

²⁴ <https://news.nus.edu.sg/nus-partners-sportsg-and-hpb-to-promote-healthy-living-on-campus/>



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