

CAMPUS

## STAYING AFLOAT

FEBRUARY 28, 2017 | THAI SIRIKOONE



Here's a fun fact: MacEwan University has a pool, and it's paid for by the students.

Specifically, students pay \$84 per term "to support the provision of sport and wellness services on campus," according to MacEwan's website. That fee includes the fitness area as well as the aquatics facilities.

This fee also supplies every student with a membership, in the form of a student ID card, to all the Sport and Wellness facilities.

"We actually find a lot of students don't even know they even have a membership here, which is crazy," Fitness Supervisor Terra Giggey says.

Many students have probably walked past or sat in the viewing area overlooking the swimming pool, but it's likely that not as many students have actually taken advantage of the pool itself.

The use of the pool facilities is nowhere near as popular as the usage of the gym and fitness facilities.

"There's a big difference. Our biggest usage is the people that come post-workout for the hot tub, but our numbers aren't even comparable to the fitness centre," Aquatics Programmer Brittany Steeden says.

So, why don't students come to swim as often as they go to the gym?

For many, it's most likely not an aversion to getting wet or smelling like chlorine, but rather a lack of enough strong swimming skills to make using the pool a worthwhile workout.

"What's tough is that swimming is not a natural thing for a lot of people. It's very technical, and if you didn't grow up swimming, it's kind of tough to get into," Giggey says.

There are plenty of programs that students and the public can take advantage of to improve their aquatic skills, which range from beginner lessons to competitive swimming. MacEwan aquatics offers many lessons specifically designed for adults who want to establish new skills or build on existing ones. These lessons could be particularly useful to any students who wish to understand the groundwork of how to swim laps, stay afloat, or get over any fears they may have.

"For a lot of people, it's the fear of the unknown if you don't know how to swim," Steeden says. "Usually by adulthood, you're more afraid of the water."

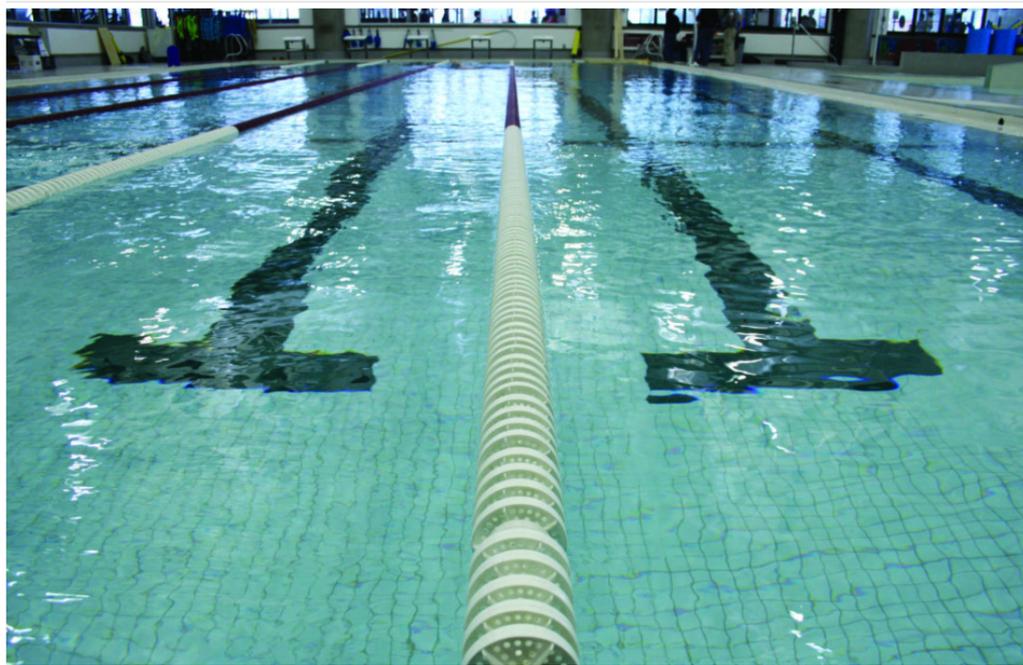


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They also offer classes for those who may want to learn the basics of water safety.

"We do have different programs, like ... 'swim to survive,' Steeden says. "It's a three-week, 45-minutes-per-week program, (and you) come in and we teach you how to survive."

Aquatics Supervisor Davi Grossi also notes that students can take advantage of the pool free of charge for public swim, as well as for student club events.

"We are opened to having student clubs using our facility, and we do so from time to time. Space is given to student clubs for free," Grossi says.

Grossi also sees an opportunity for future athletic clubs to be created with the pool in mind.

"Why not a swimming club? Why not an inner-tube water-polo club? Why not a synchro club?" Grossi asks. "These are possibilities for students to start a meaningful activity in the university, and leave behind a legacy after graduation that the university can and will cherish and support."

Although Grossi thinks the pool is underused by the student body, he also says it's not completely ignored.

"Just like the rest of Sport and Wellness, we also are busy and have run out of space in the morning before 8 a.m., during the lunch rush, and after 4 p.m.," he says. "We turn away potential customers and regular members wanting to lane swim regularly at peak times."

Giggey has noticed an increase in pool numbers recently as well, though still not equal to what the gym gets.

"There are times in the pool when it's quite busy, and over the past year and a half it's definitely peaked out," she says. "There's definitely more bodies in there, but by far, the fitness area gets used (more)."

For the most part, the increasing popularity of lessons — which is due to members of the public getting the opportunity to sign up — has been the biggest contributor to the pool's head count, according to Steeden. The pool also sees a lot of use from MacEwan's staff and faculty who, Steeden says, usually come in around morning or lunch hours, as opposed to students who usually drop in at different times due to differing class schedules.

Ultimately, the pool plays a very significant role in MacEwan's community.

"We have a very important part to play in supporting our university's pillars, in particular when it comes to community support," Grossi says. "We are a source of student employment, and continuously look to integrate our services with the student experience."

The pool also offers a female-only swim every Sunday from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., during which the viewing area balcony doors are locked and drapes are placed in the viewing area and in front of the fitness area windows. This program was implemented in order to provide a non-threatening atmosphere for new swimmers.

"We get a lot more people that are uncomfortable coming out here, (because) unfortunately we have that open viewing area and all the windows that people can usually see in," Steeden says.

Steeden says the aquatics staff hopes that, moving forward, more students will begin to take advantage of the pool, whether it be for a bit of exercise, to relax in the hot tub and steam rooms, or even just to play.

*Cover photo supplied.*

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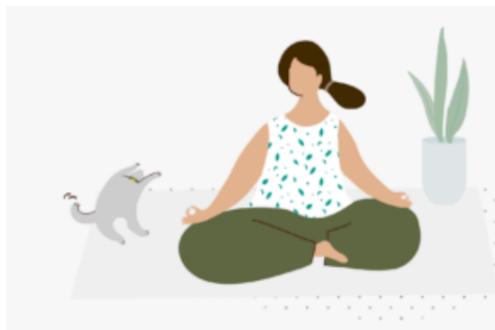
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