



THE STAIRWELL PROJECT

Taking steps to improve public health

PARTNERS

- This project received support and guidance from several students, staff, faculty, and departments across campus.
- A partnership with UCLA Sustainability in the Spring of 2014 helped get the project off the ground with the installation of “Take the Stairs” placards on all eight floors of FSPH.
- The Healthy Campus Initiative, envisioned and supported by Jane and Terry Semel, matched funding that was provided by FSPH.
- The MoveWell pod, UCLA Recreation, and the Public Health Student Association assisted in planning this comprehensive pilot project by providing critical input on implementation.
- A work group formed, which included faculty, staff, and students from FSPH. This group helped make connections with key stakeholders including the campus fire marshal, who gave the final approval to implement the StairWell pilot project.

OVERVIEW

In the Spring of 2014, the installation of several “Take the Stairs” placards marked the beginnings of a years-long effort to activate the main stairwell in the Fielding School of Public Health (FSPH). The project, which eventually became known as StairWell, aimed to promote the use of stairs over the elevators through infrastructure and design changes, re-activation of existing spaces, and visual cues on the elevators and on the stairway entrance. This strategy has multiple benefits including increasing physical activity and decreasing elevator use, and thus the need for maintenance on the FSPH elevators. Research has found that climbing stairs

burns about seven times as many calories as standing on an elevator, and two minutes of stair climbing per day burns enough calories to

eliminate the one pound of extra fat an average adult gains in one year. Initial student-led evaluation efforts demonstrated that the project had a positive impact on prompting users to take the stairs. The success of this project piqued interest from other campus partners to begin conversations on how similar projects can be done in their buildings, including partners in Bunche Hall and the Semel Institute.



PROJECT DETAILS

The implementation of the StairWell pilot project in FSPH set out to accomplish the following goals:

1. increase the visibility and use of the FSPH stairway,
2. increase FSPH school pride, and
3. create a project that can be replicated by other departments and schools at UCLA.





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FUNDING

- Once FSPH was invested, their initial funding of \$7,000 was matched by a grant from HCI.

HISTORY

- The FSPH stairway has been the subject of previous efforts to attract more people to use the stairway. FSPH Stairwell 24 is the main stairwell for the school. Located on the north side of the Center for Health Sciences (CHS) building, the stairwell connects eight floors. The stairwell was designed as a “fire stairwell” and it does not contain any windows or natural daylight.
- PHSA had previously obtained a commitment from the Dean of FSPH and created handmade signs in the interim to highlight the stairway. In Spring 2014, “Take the Stairs” placards in partnership with UCLA Sustainability were displayed. In Winter 2015, minor improvements were made which included fixing squeaky doors and installing/fixing light covers in the stairway. Finally in Fall 2015, the StairWell designs were installed.

Initial Steps: Gaining momentum to carry out an ambitious project that sought to redesign the main FSPH stairway required several meetings and collaboration with a number of stakeholders across campus. Namely, buy-in from FSPH was necessary to set other parts of the project in motion. Several meetings with UCLA Facilities provided the information necessary to price out the cost of the renovations. Finally, the UCLA Fire Marshal needed to sign off on the project to allow for the renovation of the stairway, which included redesigning the doorways and installing a vertical art gallery at each level. We worked with a local vendor, AAA Flag & Banner, to design and install the door and elevator decals, and alumna artist Jane Gottlieb donated the artwork.

Leadership: The graduate student researcher for the BEWell pod, with support from the Public Health Student Association (PHSA), led the efforts and coordination for the meetings and permissions to move the project forward.

Project Components included:

1. painting the stairway walls and handrails,
2. making minor stairway infrastructure repairs,
3. cleaning the stairway and applying sealant to the floors,
4. installing stainless steel bulletin boards and magnets and posting fact sheets about the benefits of taking the stairs,
5. installing colorful artwork on aluminum medium as a part of the vertical art gallery to increase appeal of the stairway, and
6. applying vinyl decals on elevators and doors that encourage behavior change.

In addition, a workgroup was created which included students, staff, and faculty, to oversee the process. Multiple meetings and communications were conducted with Facilities for quotes and work orders, as well as with AAA Flag & Banner for the measurements and design plans for the elevator doors and stairway doors. Finally, the workgroup advised on an evaluation plan to measure the effects of the changes to the stairway. When the project was completed, the workgroup coordinated a launch event and several publicity strategies to raise awareness of the stairway redesign.





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RESOURCES

- **WATCH:** the FSPH Stairwell Video available at ph.ucla.edu/news/multimedia/video/fsph-stairwell-taking-steps-improve-public-health



CONTACT

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DATA SNAPSHOT

- Evaluation of the stairway improvements included both physical counts and online surveys. Physical counts were conducted by an electronic people counter installed on the main entrance/exit of the stairway. Counts showed a nearly 29 percent increase in stairwell use over 14 weeks of followup compared to baseline counts.
- The online survey collected 224 responses and asked respondents about their opinions on their favorite elements, how many flights of stairs they used, and their perceptions of their own use of the project. Of respondents, 62% agreed that the project increased their use of the stairway. In addition, 86% agreed that the project improved their perception of FSPH. The typical trip lengths ranged from 2-4 floors. Finally, respondents highlighted their favorite elements of the redesign, which included the artwork, repainting of stairwell walls and handrails, and the vinyl wraps on the interior doors.

PROCESS INSIGHT

- Although there were some challenges coordinating a large and diverse workgroup, gaining support and buy-in from a number of stakeholders in this project was a critical component of these efforts. Managing a diverse group brings up competing priorities and difficult conversations about cost-sharing based on different groups' priorities. Despite this, having a clear objective and buy-in early on helped support the project moving forward. The timeline of the project, which spanned over a year, makes it challenging to keep students who are on much shorter schedules involved and engaged.
- Approval on the designs and concepts involved several iterations in order to garner agreement, assess feasibility, and make decisions on the wording and directions on the vinyl decals and other visual elements of the redesign.
- Gaining initial buy-in early and from a number of stakeholders is key! Due to commitments from the Dean of FSPH, the project was able to overcome a number of administrative hurdles early on. Secondly, student support, particularly from PHSA, represented the voice of the students of FSPH and was an important factor to keep the project moving forward.
- There are a number of small steps that can be implemented, such as placards that can begin to change the culture around stair use and lay the groundwork for future changes.



