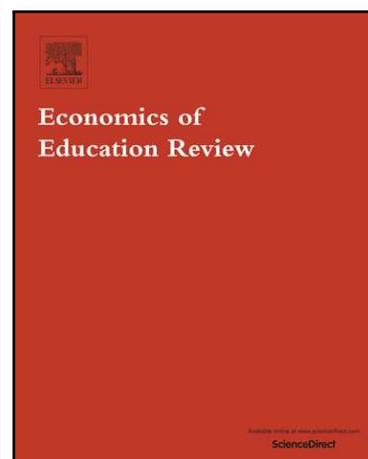


Accepted Manuscript

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Hans Fricke, Michael Lechner, Andreas Steinmayr

PII: S0272-7757(18)30058-X
DOI: [10.1016/j.econedurev.2018.06.009](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2018.06.009)
Reference: ECOEDU 1813



To appear in: *Economics of Education Review*

Received date: 23 January 2018
Revised date: 8 June 2018
Accepted date: 22 June 2018

Please cite this article as: Hans Fricke, Michael Lechner, Andreas Steinmayr, The effects of incentives to exercise on student performance in college, *Economics of Education Review* (2018), doi: [10.1016/j.econedurev.2018.06.009](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2018.06.009)

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The effects of incentives to exercise on student performance in college

Hans Fricke, Michael Lechner, and Andreas Steinmayr*

July 6, 2018

Abstract What are the effects of on-campus recreational sports and exercise on educational outcomes of university students? We randomize financial incentives to encourage students' participation in on-campus sports and exercise in two cohorts of college freshmen. Incentives increased participation frequency by 47% and improved grades by 0.14 standard deviations in the first cohort. The incentives were less effective in promoting participation and did not improve grades in the second cohort. In the first cohort, students primarily substituted off-campus with on-campus physical activities and seemed more able to integrate exercising with studying. The incentives appear to have improved grades by enhancing the effectiveness of studying and encouraging students to spend more time in class.

Keywords Sports, physical activity, human capital, student achievement, randomized experiment

JEL Classifications C93, I12, I18, I23, J24

We thank Heinz Hofstetter and Felix van den Berg for invaluable support with the administrative data of the University of St. Gallen, Nora Zogg and Peggy van der Wallen for administering our surveys, Daniel Weber, Viola Rutar, and Pavel Obratzov for outstanding research assistance. We are grateful for valuable remarks by Joshua Angrist, Eric Bettinger, Erika Byun, Yvonne Giesing, Anna Gumpert, Kirabo Jackson, Angela Johnson, Raffaele Miniaci, Hessel Oosterbeek, Jane Rochmes, three anonymous reviewers, and by seminar participants at the Labor Workshop in Laax, Stanford University, Tinbergen Institute in Rotterdam, University of Nottingham, University College London, and the 2017 AEEP Annual Conference. We are grateful for financial support from the University of St. Gallen Basic Research Fund, Migros, and CRC TRR 190 from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. Hans Fricke received funding from the Swiss National Science Foundation through grant P1SGP1_158810. The usual disclaimer applies.

Contact: Hans Fricke: Stanford University and IZA, hfricke@stanford.edu; Michael Lechner: University of St. Gallen, IZA, CESifo, and CEPR, michael.lechner@unisg.ch; Andreas Steinmayr: University of Munich (LMU), IFW Kiel, and IZA, andreas.steinmayr@econ.lmu.de

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