

The Human Element of Sustainability

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Your first semester at Harvard Business School is similar to your freshman year of undergraduate in many ways. You don't know the majority of your classmates, and you're insecure. You're not quite sure how the case method works, so you're stressed preparing and running through every possible situation in which a professor could call on you. The entire first semester is honestly a quagmire. As one of the goals of Harvard Business School's sustainability plan focuses on Health and Wellbeing, we decided to embark on a project called, "The Human Element of Sustainability." We were curious to see if and how the Student Sustainability Associates could improve the healthy, social offerings for students during this stressful time.

To begin answering this question, we surveyed our peers and spoke with staff and faculty to learn about the wellness initiatives on campus. Through our survey of students, we learned that 20% would be interested in participating in healthy activities not already offered. We also interviewed representatives from many campus services about the offerings that already exist in this realm. Ultimately, we discovered there was a gap in the range of healthy social activities offered on campus. Specifically, students wanted to get outside and try new activities with their new HBS friends.

By this point in our project, it was the middle of Boston's notorious winter, so we waited a couple of weeks, and on a beautiful Saturday in April the SSAs organized a hike to the Middlesex Fells Reservoir, a nature park twenty minutes north of campus. The event helped us gauge interest and get a feel for how students responded to a new type of activity. The hike started off with everyone introducing themselves and sharing their "dream vocation." People shared jobs that ranged from dog walker to pastry chef, and we all laughed at how our dream jobs weren't typically occupied by HBS grads. Hiking through a wide, grassy lawn we entered the slopping forest floor and enjoyed seeing foxes, birds, and the friendly neighborhood dog. Conversations throughout the day included different section norms, internship aspirations, and lessons learned during our first year at HBS. Midway through the hike we shared our favorite childhood memory.

After a successful, healthy social event, we believe the long-term solution is for the clubs at HBS that are sports and/or outdoors-focused to offer more beginner or "intro" events to students before requiring them to pay club dues. This will help students make friends early on, participate in healthy, social activities, and pick up new healthy hobbies while at HBS. The HBS club presidents for the

2019/2020 school year are excited about the idea! For example, the Outdoors club plans to offer an intro to rock climbing event, and the volleyball club plans to offer Volleyball 101 not only to recruit for their club, but also as a reminder that there are many different types of social activities to get involved in!