

# ENGAGING EMPLOYEES IN WELLNESS PROGRAMS THROUGH BRANDING AND COMMUNICATION

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## Case Study

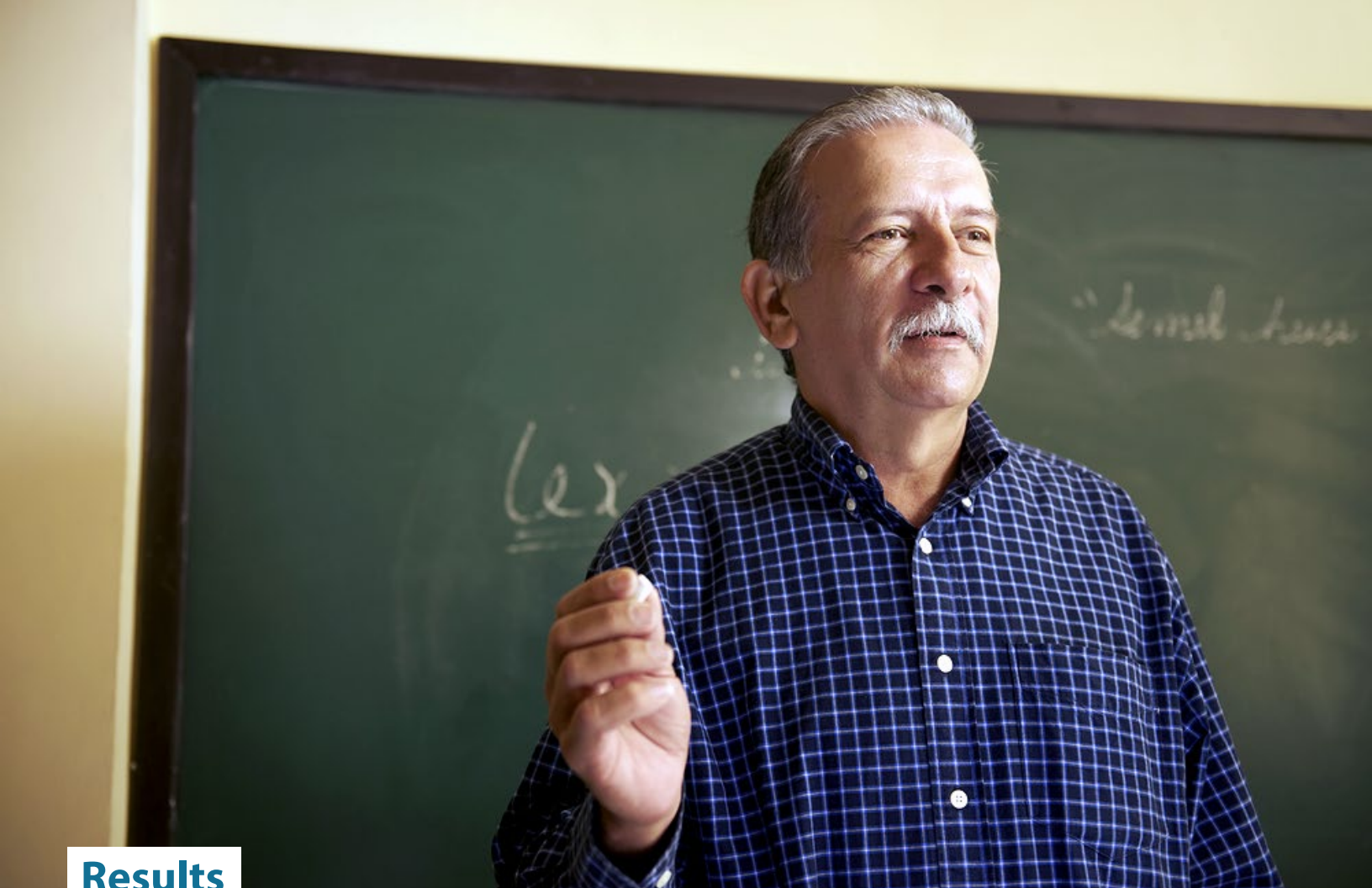
A Midwest state university had to resolve a benefits and financial dilemma. Funding from the state was decreasing each year while health care costs were continuing to rise, making the university's health plan's more expensive for faculty and staff and impacting retention and recruitment.

After several years of reducing administrative spending and negotiating favorable fees with the claims administrators and health care providers, the university could do little more to tighten spending for the health plans. Other than cutting back on benefits and increasing employees' costs, the university's remaining option was to reduce the cost of health claims.

The goal of this option is to create a healthier workforce through a wellness program that features a self-assessment of each health plan participant's health, connecting faculty and staff who are at risk for serious health conditions with expert clinicians and offering free nutrition education and fitness programs. As an incentive to participate in the wellness program, faculty and staff are rewarded with reduced paycheck deductions for their health plan.

## Communication Strategy

The communication strategy included branding the wellness program, "On the Way to Wellness," featuring one of the university's 23 foot sculpture of a runner outside the recreation center. The brand was featured in several wellness program communications, including a Wellness Guide that integrated features from the wellness program, onsite wellness programs for nutrition and fitness, the health plan's preventive care benefits, various carrier resources, such as the 24-hour nurse line and online resources, as well as free or discounted wellness programs available at local medical centers. This produced a complete and comprehensive user's guide for managing health and clearly identified various benefits and programs to fit the diverse lifestyles of the workforce.



## Results

Through the wellness program's first year, about 200 faculty and staff were found to be at high-risk for one or more of the top chronic health conditions (diabetes, hypertension and others). They were contacted by clinical experts to provide support and education in managing health risks. Others learned their health status and were encouraged to participate in onsite fitness and nutrition-education programs. The results have helped the university control rising costs through ongoing communication and education to engage employees in healthier behaviors.

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