The U.S. Navy and Indiana University's School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation have entered into a unique partnership to implement a program designed to help sailors get into better shape. SHAPE (Senior Health Assessment Program Enterprise) is a project targeting active duty service members 40 years of age and older. Launched at three navy installations (Pearl Harbor, HI, San Diego, CA, and Norfolk, VA) in September of 2008, SHAPE’s mission is to educate and motivate senior personnel, 40+ years, to achieve long-lasting health through permanent behavior change. The vision is for the over 40 Navy community to achieve improved physical fitness by participating in a top-notch program that meets the individual needs of each participant. SHAPE is an example of the community-based participatory evaluation focus the School of HPER is developing as it transitions to a School of Public Health.

The impetus of SHAPE began when Carol Kennedy-Armbruster (Senior Lecturer in the Department of Kinesiology) presented a lecture titled, “The Future of Fitness” at the American College of Sports Medicine Health and Fitness Summit. A Navy Morale Welfare and Recreation administrator, also an IU graduate, was in the audience. After learning the focus and goal of the Fitness Specialist Degree Program through this presentation she approached Kennedy-Armbruster about a potential collaboration to recruit more Fitness Specialists into the Navy Fitness Program. She asked her to present “The Future of Fitness” at the Athletic Business Conference to the Navy Fitness staff. After this presentation the program idea got underway. The School of HPER (with Kennedy-Armbruster as the principle investigator) was awarded a service contract by the U.S. Navy. Six Fitness Specialists -- five of whom earned a Fitness Specialist bachelor’s degree from the School of HPER -- reported for duty to the three select naval bases in August 2008. For the young 20-something employees, moving onto a naval base is an unexpected but very welcoming career opportunity, particularly since the Navy may potentially hire them after their one-year contract. Soon into the first year it was also discovered that this opportunity was more than just a job to the new hires. “To be able to give back is an awesome thing,” said Rusty Early, who was the first IU Fitness Specialist to work at the San Diego installation. Early, like some of the other Fitness Specialists, said he has friends or acquaintances who have served in Iraq. Besides an adventurous streak, the Fitness Specialists have an educational background in exercise science with an emphasis on applied fitness leadership skills.

The School of HPER’s Fitness Specialist bachelor’s degree program is one of the few such four-year degree programs in the country. Kennedy-Armbruster says the contract is an example of a real world “give-and-take” that’s critical to the success of the 6-year-old degree program. It demonstrates how the program’s curriculum and standards have practical applications. For instance, SHAPE utilizes a “body age” assessment system during the initial consultation as well as for a post training assessment. The equipment examines various measures of health, such as body composition, strength, flexibility, and aerobic capacity to calculate a “body age,” based on health outcomes. With the results of the participant’s health assessment, the SHAPE Fitness Specialist designs a fitness program that focuses on improving the client’s overall health. Because of the practicality as well as the common use of this type of equipment within the fitness industry, the School of HPER purchased a “body age” system and incorporates training on this assessment tool within the Fitness Specialist and Kinesiology curriculum. Determining what practical applications are needed then bringing that to HPER students to enhance their learning is a part of the win-win situation of a service contract of this proportion. Both the Navy and the School of HPER benefit.
Surprisingly, the military is seeing an increase in active duty members contending with weight control issues, paralleling similar increases in civilian communities. While SHAPE is geared toward the 40 and older population, it is the goal of the program that future participants will set a good example for the other sailors as well as insuring the new program will complement other Navy recreational and fitness programs. SHAPE had great success in its first year. Outcome data demonstrated that approximately 500 sailors had fitness assessments and almost 10,000 one–on–one training and small group session contacts occurred. Of the participants who performed pre and post assessments there was an increase in strength of 10%, an increase in aerobic capacity of 13%, an increase in flexibility of 16%, and a decrease of 7.5% body fat. These outcomes, along with personal testimonials by sailors led to the contract renewal for a second year. One sailor who worked with Brad Roberts, one of our fitness specialist alums who is spending a second year at the Norfolk site, said their work together has helped him accept new ideals of physical training and reach several personal goals, including running without having hours or days of knee pain afterward.

Lisa Sexauer, Mission Essential Branch Head for the Navy who resides in the Washington, DC Command, Navy Installations Command (CNIC), and Kennedy-Armbuster will work together for the second year to create a system for monitoring best practices regarding the mission readiness and general health and wellness of the sailors. Several of the day to day practices within SHAPE will operate through the IU Ocourse allowing a database to be created, to track the outcomes in a more sophisticated way. A SHAPE newsletter will be centrally produced for all sites to use, as well as a website to promote the program. The new database will also allow for tracking of program participation related to outcome data providing the Navy direct access to view the success of the program. This data will help the Navy document the relationship of data program tracking to participant outcomes.

There are currently three IU Fitness Specialist graduates working with SHAPE; Theresa Collison, ‘09, Brad Roberts, ‘07, and Brady Singleton, ’09. Brad Roberts (IU 07’ Fitness Specialist graduate) continued for a second year as a SHAPE employee at the Joint Forces Staff College fitness center in Norfolk, VA. Theresa Collison, 09’ IU Department of Kinesiology graduate from the Fitness Specialist Program joined Brad in Norfolk, VA. Brady Singleton, another new IU Fitness Specialist graduate traveled to San Diego, CA. The Navy hired one SHAPE employee from last year who became a FitBoss on the USS Ronald Reagan. Outlined below are the current three Fitness Specialist IU Alumni working for the SHAPE Program.

For more information on this program visit the SHAPE website at http://www.iu-shape.com.

SHAPE Fitness Specialists

Theresa Collison, B.S., ACE-PT

Theresa received her B.S. in Kinesiology with an emphasis in Fitness Specialist from Indiana University. Theresa is a certified Personal Trainer through the American Council on Exercise.
Brad Roberts, B.S., NASM-PT

Sports Medicine (NASM).

Brad received his B.S. in Kinesiology with an emphasis in Fitness Specialist from Indiana University. Brad is a certified Personal Trainer and Performance Enhancement Specialist through the National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM).

Brady Singleton, B.S., ACSM-PT

Brady received his B.S. in Kinesiology with an emphasis in Fitness Specialist from Indiana University and is currently pursuing a Master’s degree in Sports-Exercise Psychology.

Singleton, B.S., ACSM-PT

his B.S. in Kinesiology emphasis in Fitness Indiana University and pursuing a Master’s Sports-Exercise