



FAC Entrance

*“Increased physical activity has been found to enhance mood, improve energy levels, and promote quality sleep.” (Star)*



Rock Climbing Wall at the FAC.

## Utilize the FAC By Isidor Vujinovic

I never would've expected that in a 5-minute walk away from campus I would find somewhere that feels more like home than my dorm room. The FAC, or Fitness and Aquatics Center, at Loyola MD is open from 6am to 11:30pm on Monday through Thursday, 6am to 9pm on Fridays, 9am to 9pm on Saturdays and 1pm to 11:30pm on Sundays. That means it is open 107 hours a week (FAC). 107 chances each week to experience the beauty of the FAC.

The FAC, “located just one block north of the Charles Street Bridge” (FAC), offers anything you want for your leisure time. The Loyola MD website lists it as the home for “all recreation and wellness programs” (FAC). Recreation and wellness programs are meant to promote a healthy lifestyle and offer a positive impact on your mental and physical. They do this by offering activities for physical cardio such as an aquatic center, a fitness center, two court gymnasiums, two racquetball courts, two squash courts, and indoor rock-climbing wall. In addition to group fitness classes such as spin classes—indoor bike riding—and yoga. The FAC is structured in such a way as to create a community of likeminded individuals, provide a stress relief/mental booster, and help you find ways to spend your leisure time.

### Friendship

The FAC offers a range of different physical activities catering to all different preferences when it comes to working out, and as you begin to find which activity caters to your preferences, you become surrounded by students who have similar preferences as you. Through your commitment to this activity, you will make friends with those who are around you, so, if as an incoming student you worry about finding friends, the FAC solves your problem: “I've met a lot of good buds at the gym” (Luke Kilroy 2027). As the FAC offers such a vast number of different programs, something must catch your eye. Take advantage of this. Try something new. Put yourself in situations to meet new people.

### Mental Health

The FAC creates a place where the stresses and anxiety of school can be left at the door. As you venture on your first bus ride, or walk through Notre Dame, you will realize how busy the FAC is. Throughout all the hours of the day, you will find somebody around you. If it's working out in the gym with you, shooting a basketball on another court or someone else hitting abs on the upstairs turf, all these students around you are there for the same reason: to procrastinate on some homework, take a break in between some studying, get their mind off something or to get a sweat going.

For most, the gym is a universal place for relief, and this sense of community creates the reassurance that you are not alone. All the Loyola student body deals with tests, hard assignments, tedious readings, the feeling that there is not enough time in the day to get everything done. The FAC teaches you to understand that you are not alone. Also, physical activity biologically benefits your mental health: "Increased physical activity has been found to enhance mood, improve energy levels, and promote quality sleep."(Star) By running or lifting weights you actively decrease the release of stress hormones like cortisol. This and the additional release of feel-good hormones—dopamine—is why working out makes people happy and less stressed. This is why physical exercise is used as a break, because it makes your mood better. If you're ever anxious or stressed, capitalize on natural dopamine at the FAC.

### Productive Way to Spend Time

Outside of the mental health benefits and contribution to making friends, the FAC's simply a good way to spend your time. Countless afternoons I have found myself bored after finishing my classes. Taking advantage of the FAC, I will sign out a basketball and shoot around for as long as an hour or as short as 20 minutes. Waiting until one of my club meetings or intermural games starts, I use basketball as a way to bide the time. It offers a more beneficial way of spending my free time, as opposed to mindlessly scrolling on TikTok. Getting lost in playing basketball or any other offered activity also allows you time to think. Brainstorming, *what am I going to write this paper about? How do I solve this math problem? Or am I going to make the walk to Iggy's because Boulder is already closed?* Shooting around for maybe as little as 30 minutes has been the driving force for some of my best written papers and has helped me find the answer to ambiguous situations. By positively spending your free time, you won't feel like you've been lazy or wasted any time. Spending this time in the FAC, no matter how long, is more beneficial than things such as bingeing tv. Activities such as this are sedentary and have fewer positive implications on your health than even a little exercise.

The Fitness and Aquatics Center creates a utopia for us college students to take a break from our stressful lives. The FAC is the home to all recreation and wellness programs, and it does just that. Ensures our wellness. The FAC creates a space where people can become friends with likeminded people and offers ways to positively impact our mental health and spend our free time. Whenever you feel lost—that your world is ending—venture to the FAC. It's crucial to a stress-free freshman year. Utilize it.



Pick up games at the FAC courts



Outside of the gym