

**“I firmly believe that prioritizing health has a direct correlation to making music. Preparing your body to move and engage in musical practice is just as important as the practice itself.”**

**—FYE student**

The NEC First Year Experience (FYE) is a yearlong suite of courses, structured mentorship and active learning that introduces students to the creative mindsets and tangible skillsets necessary for a successful and healthy college and professional career. During the First Year Experience, students will develop the twin skill sets of internal personal discovery and the ability to participate communally in the interconnected world around them.

Musicians are athletes. The physical demands of practice and performance require them to pay careful attention to their health and wellness to achieve a safe and successful musical career. Muscle use varies depending on the instrument, but none are exercised in the way they normally are in our day-to-day lives: String players asymmetrically bend their bodies to pull a bow across the strings; wind players tighten their cheek and jaw muscles and manipulate their tongues to blow sound through their horns; percussionists constantly absorb vibrations through their arms as they pound on timpani and crash cymbals; and singers must balance their use of their instrument with basic needs for communication to prevent overuse of their vocal muscles.

It is easy to get carried away doing something we love. Music, like sports, requires repetitive motions that can lead to serious and sometimes permanent injuries that can have an impact on one's career. In a recent survey, 83 percent of First Year Experience students reported that they are most apt to seek further evaluation from health care professionals if they experience symptoms that affect performance or practice. On alternating weeks, FYE students will actively participate in mental and physical health and wellness training activities. Led by expert musician health faculty, students will learn best practices in injury recognition and prevention, stress management, resilience and more. NEC's First Year Experience teaches students from day one of their rigorous studies that health and wellness are an integral part of their musical success.

## Health and Wellness for Musicians

*“As musicians gain a broader perspective on what causes playing-related injuries, we become better equipped to break down the stigma that injury is a result of improper technique or poor practice. We realize that it is a physical hurdle that we must feel empowered to overcome.”*

—FYE student

OF PROFESSIONAL  
ORCHESTRAL MUSICIANS:

**70-80%**

have reported performance-related injuries (PRIs), and seventy-six percent have reported at least one medical problem that severely affected their performance.

OF COLLEGE-LEVEL  
INSTRUMENTAL  
PERFORMANCE MAJORS :

**10%**

report a PRI each year.

OF THE 204 NEC STUDENTS WHO COMPLETED A CAMPUS WIDE HEALTH AND WELLNESS SURVEY IN FALL 2018:

**31%**

reported a history of PRIs. Forty-eight percent of the 52 NEC faculty who completed the survey reported a history of PRIs.

**45%**

of NEC students say they would like more health-related programming and services on campus.

**19%**

did not know that the NEC Health and Counseling center screens and tests PRIs.

*“We as musicians must be aware of health and wellness because without it, we could potentially jeopardize our entire career path.”*

—FYE student

*“Both sessions on musician physical health and body mapping have helped me be aware of what my body is telling me as I am playing the trumpet. Prior to those sessions, I would play until I felt that I was tired, ignoring any potential signs of injury or over-fatigue. Now I listen to any sign my body gives me and react accordingly.”*

—FYE student

OF THE 58 FYE STUDENTS WHO COMPLETED A HEALTH AND WELLNESS SURVEY IN FALL 2020:

**~75%**

rated their knowledge of PRI risk factors at 1 to 3 on a scale of 5, where 1 is not familiar and 5 is very familiar.

### SOURCES

- Medical Problems of Performing Artists, Ackermann et al 2012
- Int'l Conference of Symphony Orchestra Musicians, Fishbein 1987
- Medical Problems of Performing Artists, Cayea 1998