The inception of the Fitness & Informal area of University Recreation began as an idea of Larry Horine (HLES Chair) and Braxton Harris (Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs) in 1973. They hoped to provide the students of Appalachian with a “drop-in” forum for recreation.

In 1975 Dr. Jim Avant became the Director of Campus Recreation & Intramurals. Under his reign the Fitness & Informal area grew from a single Universal Gym to a multi-purpose independent facility.

Fitness & Informal was birthed in the Human Performance lab of Varsity Gym. In this room was a single piece of equipment (Universal machine) used by the ASU Football team. During the times that it was not used by the team Dr. Avant requested use of the machine, provided a Supervisor to oversee the area and allowed the entire student body access to the resistance training equipment. The proposal was accepted, and in the Spring of 1976 approximately 500–600 students took advantage of the program. That number dramatically increased to 10,000 total participation during the 1976 Fall Semester. This dramatic increase coupled with the football team moving into Owens Field House, allowed the Universal to be moved to the stairwell in front of the “Pits” area. The machine remained housed here until 1987.

Weight training was not the only program offered. During the Spring semester of 1981, the first aerobic class was offered in the dance studio of Broome Kirk Gym. It was initiated by Kathy Hart, an Appalachian student who requested the area to get some friends together for exercise. The initial group began as approximately 20 participants, but quickly grew to over 75. This number was much too large for the dance studio, so the class was moved to Broome-Kirk Gym basketball courts. Intramurals, free play and varsity sports all shared this area, so only a single class was offered from 9:00pm – 10:00pm Monday – Thursday. Participation continued to increase to over 200 per class. The class was moved temporarily to Varsity Gym to allow for the expansion, with the maximum attendance topping 600 before stabilizing close to 100 after the Spring Break. This class was moved back to Broome – Kirk Gym, and remained there until 1987. Demand for other classes was great, so an additional class was offered at Legends from 5:30pm – 6:30pm (1983 – 1987).

The idea for an independent facility for student recreation was developed and the project was completed in 1987. The Quinn Rec Center opened its doors with a line from the front doors to Rivers Street, with 978 participants opening day. The need for this west side campus facility was apparent. This participation has continued to increase over the more recent years. Weekly participation now averages close to 8,600. In June of 1995, an east side campus facility, the Mt. Mitchell Fitness Centre located on the third floor of the Plemons Student Union was opened. It was originated to provide
recreational services to the east, largely female populated side of campus. It is a smaller facility with this female population in mind throughout the design.