



Reshaping the Sport Model for Athletics and Recreation

at Wilfrid Laurier University

Submitted by: Peter Baxter, Director of Athletics & Recreation

"Wilfrid Laurier University is committed to developing the best Athletics and Recreation program in Canada. The Department of Athletics and Recreation is a student leadership driven program which strives to provide the spectrum of co-curricular opportunities from casual recreation; fitness; instructional sport, dance, martial arts; physical activity clubs to intramural leagues and tournaments to high performance inter-university varsity teams."

- Vision Statement Laurier Department Athletics and Recreation

Background

In recent years, universities across Canada, including Laurier, have faced some significant budget challenges. At the same time, Laurier has experienced significant growth in student enrolment and a corresponding increase in demand for recreational and intramural activities and related space. Since 2009, Laurier's Department Athletics and Recreation has sought to increase revenues and decrease costs, including implementing a participation fee paid for by student-athletes, and an introduction of a self-funded model for eight varsity sports. However, it was determined that ongoing across-the-board budget restrictions for all teams would only weaken the university's ability to field competitive teams at the provincial and national levels.

In light of all these factors, the university undertook a detailed program review of its varsity and recreational programs and budgets. All varsity teams were evaluated on a wide range of 16 criteria. Since the beginning of the program review, consultative activities have taken place including coach's input survey on all criteria during the fall of 2009, multi-year sport data and recreation data, facility booking records and user data, reports to the Athletics and Recreation Advisory Committee, year-end player evaluation feedback, and consultation with various senior administrators and student governments.

Program Review Evaluation Criteria

- 1) Vision, Mission, Values
- 2) Strategic Planning
- 3) Leadership & Coaching
- 4) Student-athlete/student leader development
- 5) Identity/Pride/ Recognition
- 6) Interuniversity Sport Program Portfolio
- 7) Facilities and Equipment
- 8) Resources- People, Money, and Time
- 9) Commitment/ Student Interest
- 10) Senior Administrative support
- 11) Recruitment
- 12) Athletic Therapy
- 13) Interuniversity Sport Governance and League commitments
- 14) History reflective of Athletic and Recreation values
- 15) Sports Information, Marketing & Communications, & Event Management
- 16) Alumni Connection, Involvement, and support

Challenges

Growth in participation and excess demand as can be seen from the following tables.

Intramural Team Growth at Laurier			
1997/1998	1998/1999	2001/2002	2009/2010
76	253	360	581

Residence League Intramural Teams			
1997/1998	1998/1999	2001/2002	2009/2010
0	18	69	100

Instructional Program Participation		
1998/1999	2001/2002	2009/2010
475	1,147	1,831

Fitness Centre Use (participants per hour)	
1997/1998	2009/2010
5 / hour	260 / hour

Intramural Wait Lists by the Number:

- In 2009-2010 there were approximately 830 participants on a wait list
- In fall 2010 the intramural program could not meet the needs of 200 participants despite adding a new tennis league and a series of tournaments.
- Continued pressures on gymnasium space from intramurals, casual/drop-in recreation, and campus club events.

Budget Challenges for 2011-12 and beyond

- The department can't sustain further cuts in the short or long term future.
- Address impact of the growing number of students on recreational facilities by increasing opportunities in reallocation of space. Intramural league activity in the gymnasium already concludes at 1:00 a.m.
- Must address risk management by developing an aquatics specialist program coordinator position with responsibilities to service the transfer of up to a possible 12 WLUSU Recreational/Sport clubs/Teams which the student union will no longer regulate/sanction beginning 2011-12 academic year.
- Most of the interuniversity sports have reached the limit on reducing costs and maintaining the necessary financial to meet league requirements as well as remaining competitive at the provincial and national level.
- Addition of new teams from other OUA institutions in some leagues and interlock play in some varsity sports has increased travel costs significantly i.e. Nipissing University entering men's hockey and travel to Far East Division resulted in a \$15,000 increase in travel cost.
- Currently funded varsity programs that are under resourced; men's and women's basketball, men's and women's hockey, men's and women's soccer in comparison with their competitors to stay competitive at the provincial and national level.
- Need to double the financial allotment to the Volleyball programs to reach the level of support to be competitive at both the provincial and national levels. A decision was needed on whether we have an excellence program or we don't.
- Need to eliminate the overtime liability in communication/events and athletic therapy workload based on the current requirements of varsity teams.

Results of Quantitative Ranking for Market Driven Sports

Women's Soccer	95
Men's Basketball	94
Women's Basketball	93
Men's Soccer	88
Football	80
Women's Hockey	76
Men's Hockey	75
Men's Volleyball	64
Women's Volleyball	56

Comparison of Financial Budgets to Top CIS Teams

	CIS Top Team 'A'	CIS Top Team 'B'	Laurier
Men's Volleyball	\$ 250,000	\$ 104,000	\$ 47,000
Women's Volleyball	\$ 250,000	\$ 110,000	\$ 65,000

Competitive Records Over the Last 5 Years

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Men's	8-12 40%	6-14 30%	11-9 55%	9-11 45%	8-12 40%
	OUA Playoff appearances in last five years: 0-2 CIS Top 10 Appearances: None				
Women's	10-9 53%	12-7 63%	8-11 42%	6-13 32%	8-11 42%
	OUA Playoff appearances in last five years: 0-2 CIS Top 10 Appearances: None				

Recommendations

- Based on the results of the program review, Wilfrid Laurier University will discontinue its men's and women's varsity volleyball teams to address the growing student demand for recreational and intramural sports activities and use the resources to keep other varsity sports competitive.
- With the transfer of up to a possible 12 WLUSU Recreational/Sport Clubs/Teams which the student union will no longer regulate/sanction beginning 2011-12 academic year as well as the implementation of the New OUA Sport Model in 2010 at the conference level, the Athletic and Recreation will develop a new WLU Sport Model and finalize by June 30th, 2011.
- Resources will be allocated for the development of a Clubs/Aquatics specialist program coordinator position with responsibilities to service the transfer of new recreational clubs, address the growth of intramural and instructional programs, and address the risk management needs by having an Aquatics Specialist supervise the operations of the Athletic Complex 50-metre pool.
- The facility allocation recovered by the discontinuation of the volleyball programs will be reallocated to the intramural, recreation and club programs.
- Resources will be reallocated to men's and women's basketball, men's and women's hockey, men's and women's soccer to ensure that those varsity teams stay competitive on the provincial and national level.