

A Commitment to Progress

An update on initiatives underway in response to Rowan University's Athletics Department program review

July 10, 2019

Cheryl Levick, an independent consultant with extensive expertise in collegiate athletics program management, issued a comprehensive program review of Rowan's Athletics Department. She reported her findings, analysis and recommendations regarding areas she identified as needing immediate attention, as well as policies and practices that would place the Athletics program on par with the best Division III programs in the nation. (See the [program review report](#).)

At different points throughout her examination of the Athletics Department, the consultant provided feedback on perceived program gaps so the University could begin its work to address issues rather than wait until she concluded her report. Those items are highlighted below, along with other improvements that have either been implemented, are underway or will be evaluated in the fall.

About the Recommendations

The report offered recommendations in the following categories: organizational structure, budget, policies and procedures, facilities and Title IX issues. The University is addressing health and safety issues immediately and has begun to address areas such as staff reorganizations and adopting new policies and procedures, a process that will continue during the next several weeks and into the fall. Longer-term investments will be considered alongside other institutional priorities.

Below is a summary of the recommendations and progress being made.

Organizational Structure

The report listed 14 recommendations about the organizational structure of the Athletics Department.

Initiatives implemented or to be implemented immediately:

- The Athletics Department now reports directly to the Office of the President, with the interim athletic director reporting to the senior vice president for Administration on day-to-day operations.
- The associate athletic director, Penny Kempf, already serves as the senior woman's administrator (SWA), but immediate changes to policies and procedures will allow her to more effectively monitor expenses and departmental decisions to ensure equity.
- We will conduct a search for a senior-level administrator to focus on student-athlete welfare, sport oversight and to assist with overall decision-making.
- We will hire one full-time athletic trainer, with a second position under consideration for later this academic year. The addition of two athletic trainers will give Rowan five, the highest staffing level in the New Jersey Athletic Conference.
- We will upgrade four part-time assistant coach positions for women's sports to full-time.
- We will hire a strength-and-conditioning specialist to work with all athletes.
- The equipment manager's responsibilities will be broadened to enable that individual to manage all purchases and distribution of team apparel (i.e., shoes, uniforms, training gear).

- Human Resources is reviewing all position titles, associated descriptions/responsibilities and salaries (AFT classifications/union contracts) to ensure equity.
- We will enhance professional and leadership development training.

Items to Review this Academic Year

- We will examine staff positions to determine which can be expanded to include oversight of individual teams. Spreading this critical function among several managers will allow for better overall management.

Budget

Although the report was complimentary about budget management, the consultant made 16 recommendations, most related to policies and procedures.

Initiatives implemented or to be implemented immediately:

- Create a multi-person approval process for all expenditures and for filing of NCAA and U.S. Department of Education Equity in Athletic Data Analysis reports.
- Review staffing and budget levels for each sport.
- Implement an annual audit process.
- Start budget planning, in a more collaborative manner, in November for the following academic year.
- Update policy and procedures manual.

Athletics Policies & Procedures

There were six recommendations, including four about aspects of the policy and procedures manual.

Initiatives to be implemented this fall:

- Expand the student-athlete annual code-of-conduct training, including sexual misconduct and bystander engagement training components. The training will be offered in a group setting with all athletes, followed by team sessions with the SWA and AD present.
- Coach/staff fiscal training will include policy and procedures related to approvals for team account spending from the SWA and AD.
- Updated financial budgeting and approval processes, including spending of departmental funds, will now require approval of an individual sport supervisor.

Facilities

There were six recommendations regarding facilities. The following initiatives are underway.

- Expansion of the weight room and related storage area, which will be completed by September.
- This summer, the University will place an office trailer at the West Campus practice fields that will have water, restrooms, meeting space and room for athletic trainers to care for injured players.
- Reassign office space this summer to achieve equity.

- Engineering firms have been hired to evaluate and make recommendations about the following facilities:
 - Esby Gymnasium, to determine whether it is cost-effective to invest in improving the building.
 - Esby Gym pool, to determine whether the space can be repurposed.
 - John Green Team House, to determine how it can be expanded.

Recommendations to be reviewed this fall:

- Relocation/expansion of locker rooms and athletic training facilities. The HVAC issues (reduced airflow) are being addressed this summer.

NOTE: For the past four years, the University has been working with a private developer (West Campus Fields, Inc.) that is proposing to build a 300-acre sports complex on the north side of Rowan’s West Campus—one of the largest of its kind on the East Coast. Although the complex will be privately owned, it would be home to Rowan Athletics, complete with practice, training and playing facilities. West Campus Fields Inc. is in the final stage of developing the project and has recently submitted an application for tax relief through the New Jersey Economic Development Authority. The outcome of this project will determine how the University will address long-term facility needs.

Title IX Review

Earlier this year, Rowan conducted two investigations as a result of students’ concerns about policies related to practice apparel and equity throughout the program. The Title IX investigator’s report determined that there were no Title IX violations related to student complaints. The Human Resource investigation focused on related personnel issues. ([See Feb. 25 letter from President Houshmand](#)).

The consultant who conducted the program review did not examine Title IX matters related to the original concerns or personnel issues, but rather focused on topics related to policies and procedures, such as distribution of equipment and supplies, scheduling of games and practices, travel allowances for players, number of coaches per sport and their responsibilities, academic support, locker rooms and practice/playing facilities, and support services.

Some of the immediate changes will include:

- Better management of the team revenue accounts to ensure expenditures are equitable.
- Adoption of new policies and procedures related to travel and per diem allowances.
- Review of the number of coaches, AFT ranges/union contracts and salaries and adjustments for equity.
- Reviewing job descriptions and compensation for all coaching positions.
- An equity review of salary and benefits before filling future coaching positions.
- Regular reviews of the courtesy car program which provides vehicles coaches use for travel related to recruiting.

Note: The consultant interviewed two student athletes from each of the 18 sports teams (members of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee) about a wide range of topics, including their perceptions about the current culture among student-athletes. While they stated that the “sports

bra” issue put some teams on edge and members of the Women’s Track and Field team feel there is a lack of respect for them, the consultant also found:

- Student-athletes are happy, positive and support each other.
- There is a strong bond among the teams.
- Overwhelmingly, male and female athletes feel as though they are treated equally.

Listening & Learning

Overall, the consultant made many positive comments about Athletics’ programs, personnel, students and processes while providing valuable recommendations about important issues. Listening to our student-athletes’ and others’ concerns and inviting expert, objective review has allowed the University to address important matters and move toward becoming a model athletics program. Rowan is committed to ensuring respect for all members of its community and rejects even the suggestion of tolerating inequality in any form toward anyone. We will build upon this progress and continue the conversation through team and departmental meetings and University-wide open forums starting in September.