

Applying Sustainability practices to UVM Club Sports

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NIRSA's commitment to Sustainability

NIRSA, as an important part of the higher education community has been looking the past few years at its overall approach to sustainability in Campus Recreation. On NIRSA's website it states:

There are many reasons why collegiate recreation should play a critical and active role in these efforts. Campus recreation departments have one of the largest carbon footprints on almost any given campus, use a disproportionate amount of energy, manage huge financial operations, and interact with more of the campus population than nearly any other entity. As educators, NIRSA professionals have an obligation to assist students in learning about and applying sustainability and support the future leaders of our shared world. (NIRSA Website, Sustainable Communities)

Through the work of the Sustainability Commission, NIRSA has not only stated its desire to create sustainable communities but has created a framework to guide decision making for Campus Recreation outlets in the future. What is great about the commission's framework is that while it looks at the important area of the environment through the sustainable lens it also examines other areas that require attention such as social and economic issues. Often times we overlook the latter two categories when talking about sustainability but when examining the education of our students and looking at their whole experience during and after college, social and economic issues are of major importance.

This framework, presented at the 2012 Conference & Expo outlines six categories. The categories are:

- Social (Education, Equity, Inclusiveness, Justice, Diversity, Community)
- Environmental (Natural Resources)
- Economic (Cost Saving, ROI, Profits, R&D)
- Social & Environmental (Environmental Justice, Stewardship)
- Environmental & Economic (Energy Efficiency, Buildings/Construction)
- Economic & Social (Business Ethics, Labor Rights, Fair Trade, Service)

This framework is the basis for this poster as the University of Vermont (UVM) Club Sports looks to apply the guiding principles created by the commission to the operation of its program.

Sustainability and Green Initiatives at UVM

UVM is committed to the idea of a greener tomorrow and creating policies and programs for sustainability. On the Office of Sustainability's website it states,

The Office of Sustainability aims to foster sustainable development and promote environmental responsibility at the University of Vermont by strategically bridging the academic activities of teaching, research, and outreach with the operations of the University. (uvm.edu/sustain)

Two examples of this practice at UVM are all new buildings must be LEED Certified and a recent ban on the sale of bottled water on campus. Looking at issues of economics, UVM seeks to provide merit and need based aid to as many students as possible. Examining the social issues, UVM has demonstrated a significant commitment to issues of Social Justice and Campus Climate.



Sustainability and UVM Club Sports

The Process

With the charge of UVM and the framework provided by the NIRSA Commission on Sustainability UVM Club Sports is well positioned to analyze its current practices and design a framework to encourage sustainable practices in its programs.

The first step in this process was to adopt the NIRSA commission on Sustainability's framework. Using this model, UVM Club Sports listed all of the different practices it was already doing in each of the six categories. In many ways the program already was operating with an underlying dedication to the core principles of sustainability but being able to name them was an important step.

After listing the current practices being employed brainstorming was done on what additional steps could be taken to be more sustainable in each category and then included in the tables.

With a full list of current and future practices, a realistic timeline for the desired practices was created and illustrated through the use of colors in the table

Student Support and Buy-In

After creating this table and framework it was important to have student input and student support. Club Sports Council leaders were asked to review the table and make additional suggestions. From there, the table was presented to the entire Club Sports Council for input and support. As a framework, Club Sports Council representatives were on board, particularly around economic issues. At this point, the first major steps towards reaching our sustainability goals are underway and are as follows:

- Last spring UVM Club Sports raised enough money to off-set its Carbon footprint related to travel and hopes to hit the target again this spring.
- A statement on Sustainability is currently being developed and reviewed.
- UVM Club Sports is in the latter stages of a process to order apparel made from recycled materials and local in nature whenever possible. To this effect we are looking to create partnerships with companies that can do this for us for at a good cost.
- We have improved are Athletic Training offerings, Safety Protocols, and concussion management practices.
- Our marketing team is looking at creating more inclusive content.

There are definitely some challenges along the way. Our desire to increase fundraising initiatives and need based aid for our clubs have stalled somewhat although having the conversation is a good start. We have shown increases in club's doing service but will likely not hit our goal this year.

<p style="text-align: center;">SOCIAL education • equity • inclusiveness • justice • diversity • community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 50% of our clubs participate in service – our goal will be to have at least 75% of our clubs performing service projects in the next school year • We have a ‘club atmosphere’ statement/policy which clearly affirms our commitment to inclusiveness across all identities • We publicly support the ‘Athlete Ally’ and ‘If you can play, you can play’ campaigns • We plan to improve our marketing efforts to showcase multiple identities and do our own, ‘If you can play, you can play’ video • We incorporate segments on inclusiveness in our trainings as well through mailing list emails; We regularly discuss the need to create safe and welcoming environments • We have had strategic conversations with individual teams on topics of gender and transgender participants • Our Club Sports Council is charged with initiatives to create community 	<p style="text-align: center;">ENVIRONMENTAL natural resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We encourage and facilitate the use of environmentally friendly transportation whenever possible providing resources for 12 passenger vans and bussing whenever possible • We have compiled the overall carbon footprint of our clubs’ travels and will continue to track this year to year • We have purchased water jugs and refillable bottles to cut down on the need for plastic one use bottles • We will investigate only purchasing T-shirts from recycled materials, manufactured in the US, and printed locally 	<p style="text-align: center;">ECONOMIC cost savings • ROI • profits • R&D</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are very concerned with frugality and minimizing the financial impact on our participants • We encourage fundraising by all of our clubs • We are investigating two potential fundraising projects: a dedicated website for club giving and micro-philanthropy • Our fee structure is solid and will provide adequate funding for years to come; we are working with higher expense clubs on creating endowments for long term success • We would like to create a fund for financial aid for participants who demonstrate need
<p style="text-align: center;">SOCIAL & ENVIRONMENTAL environmental justice • stewardship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We encourage our groups to purchase items from local vendors as much as possible • We encourage clubs to do service by rewarding them with ‘bonus points’ and publishing their efforts whenever they do • We have transitioned virtually all of our marketing efforts to electronic formats such as social media, flat screens, etc. 	<p style="text-align: center;">ENVIRONMENTAL & ECONOMIC energy efficiency • buildings/construction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have created a carbon off-setting initiative where we seek to raise funds to donate to projects helping balance out our carbon footprint • When purchasing items, its lifecycle is an important consideration in the approval process • We are very conscious of field use to maintain them with limited costs and resources • We will be developing a statement on sustainability 	<p style="text-align: center;">ECONOMIC & SOCIAL business ethics • labor rights • fair trade • service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We program very intentionally around the high times of the school year avoiding mid-terms and finals time • We have developed a points system for awarding coaching stipends in hopes of making allocations equitable • Our clubs are heavily subsidized making them as affordable for students as we can • We require workshops throughout the year to prepare our students for the role; we also have a Club Sports Council and an Emerging Leaders program • We have invested in our student’s health – we have an Athletic Training Program in place that covers high risk practices, high and medium risk games, and provides clinic hours for students to be seen at no cost to the clubs or participants • We plan to add ImPact testing and tighter concussion protocol

Currently we are meeting many of the expectations of a sustainable program. The grid above articulates our current successes in the six areas identified by the NIRSA as well as items we would like to add.

Black text = items we already have in practice

Blue text = short term goals to be met within the next 1-2 years

Red text = longer term goals