

THE ROLE OF THE ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT

How Athletics Supports the University of Minnesota, Crookston Mission

Intercollegiate athletics helps support the University's mission by offering activities that enhance students' personal and cultural development, while providing lifelong skills and team building techniques that will benefit the future of each student athlete. Athletics also provides community awareness and involvement. The University of Minnesota, Crookston receives statewide publicity, which also benefits the recruitment of students and ultimately proves to be a major contributor in providing exposure for UMC, regionally and nationally. Intercollegiate athletics inspires more opportunities and builds a connection for alumni, as a way to increase the potential for future gift giving to the University.

The University of Minnesota, Crookston's affiliation with NCAA Division II and the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference provides a unique balance between athletics and academics. It enables the student athlete to obtain a rich and quality education, allowing professional growth and development from a hands-on, four-year, career orientated institution, while participating in athletics at a competitive and highly respected level.

Athletics on the University of Minnesota, Crookston campus provides commitment to gender equity and diversity, while upholding a greater sense of integrity, leadership, sportsmanship and ethical behavior to the overall campus dynamic.

Intercollegiate Athletics

The University of Minnesota, Crookston athletic program is currently in its ninth year as a member of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division II and eighth year as a member of the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference (NSIC) – member schools include; Bemidji State University, Concordia St. Paul, Northern State University, Wayne State College, Winona State University, Minnesota State University Moorhead, Upper Iowa University, Southwest Minnesota State University, University of Mary. The hockey team competes in the NCAA Division III Midwest Collegiate Hockey Association (MCHA) and the Equestrian team competes in the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association (IHSA). With some 280 student athletes the athletic program has grown over the last decade. Many athletes have earned All-Conference and All-Academic honors while competing for UMC.

Past and Ongoing Successes

Some of the recent *athletic teams' accomplishments* include:

- 2006 Women's Basketball ranked 8th out of 25 on the Academic Honor Role in Division II by the Women's Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA)
- 2006 Men's Golf Super Regional's
- UMC student athletes have also received numerous all-conference and all-academic team awards
- Joe Hasz All-Time NSIC Scoring Leader (Men's Basketball)
- 2004-2005 Nationals Participant (Women's Golf)
- 2004-2005 Nationals Participant (Men's Golf)
- 2004-2005 Nationals Participant (Equestrian)
- 2004-2005 MCHA Runner-Up (Hockey)
- 2003-2004 Nationals Participant (Equestrian)
- 2003-2004 Nationals Participant (Men's Golf)

- 2003-2004 A Division II, Top 25 poll ranked team at No. 8, with a 3.451 cumulative team grade point average in the WBCA Academic Honor Roll, highest-rated school in the NSIC (Women's Basketball)
- 2002-2003 Nationals Participant (Equestrian)
- 2002-2003 NSIC Runner-Up (Women's Basketball)
- 2002-2003 Qualified for their first time ever NSIC Tournament (Soccer)
- 2003-2004 MCHA Champions (Hockey)
- 2002-2003 MCHA Champions (Hockey)
- 2002-2003 Nationals Team Participant (Men's Golf)
- 2002 NSIC Champions (Men's Golf)

The latest graduation rate for student athletes is on par with the general student population at 39 percent.

The UMC athletic program was successful in securing the **NCAA II Strategic Alliance Matching grant**. The grant allows for the hiring of a full-time Assistant Athletic Director/Senior Women's Administrator. The salary for this position is funded through the NCAA and UMC for a total of five years (year 1: NCAA 75% and UMC 25%, year 2: NCAA 50% and UMC 50%, year 3: NCAA 25% and UMC 75 %, years 4 and 5: UMC 100%). The grant contract has entered its 3rd year and the employee in this new position is continually reaching goals and expectations in regards to progress and growth within the position. Some accomplishments include: progression in the areas of marketing and promotions, game day experience, corporate sponsorships, attracting new people to events, implementing Kids Club and working with the Athletic Director in areas of budget management and planning, game management, event coordination and working weekly with the Athletic Management Team. Other responsibilities include: advising the Student Athletic Advisory Committee, supervision of Sports Information office, department interns and work-study employees, serving on various campus and national committees, monitoring Gender Equity and Title IX issues, and attending various conferences and training sessions each year.

Student athletes also participate in many community service activities through the **Student Athletic Advisory Committee (SAAC)**, which is a committee made up of student athletes assembled to provide insight on the student-athlete experience. The SAAC also offers input on the rules and regulations and policies that affect student-athletes' lives on NCAA member institution campuses. NCAA legislation mandates that all member institutions have SAAC's on their respective campuses. The purpose of SAAC may vary across campuses; however the following five points reflect the primary purposes of SAAC and should serve as a guideline when developing a strategic plan:

- Generate a student-athlete voice within the institution
- Solicit student-athlete response to proposed NCAA legislation
- Suggest potential NCAA legislation
- Organize community service efforts
- Create a vehicle for student-athlete representation on campus-wide or conference-wide committees

UMC's SAAC participate in a wide variety of activities including alcohol/drug education, educational outreach, and community outreach. The SAAC projects such as "Book Buddies" and "Meals on Wheels" have been a positive bridge builder to the community. The SAAC was honored in 2002 with the Dale Knotek Community Service award and continues to take part in significant projects throughout the community of Crookston and on campus. Volunteer programs such as "Habitat for Humanity", the Polk County Public Health's "Fitness Fever" and other programs with a mentoring influence are just a few areas in which SAAC is an essential part of

ongoing program success. Nationally the SAAC is involved with the "Make a Wish" foundation at the Division II level. In 2006 Division II SAAC's raised over \$100,000 for "Make a Wish". Our SAAC officers will also have the opportunity to attend the annual NSIC Spring Meetings where they will be a part of a larger volunteer project in collaboration with other member's SAAC's.

The UMC Athletic Department was successful in receiving the **NCAA II Degree Completion Award twice**, which was awarded to Amy Kuznia, Women's Basketball player in April of 2004 and Christie Chappell, Women's Soccer player in 2006.

In the fall of 2003 the UMC Athletic program went through a **compliance audit** by the NCAA. A blueprint program has been put in place to ensure athletic compliance in the NCAA. A **compliance committee** has been established on campus to monitor and ensure initial and continuing eligibility along with all aspects of NCAA compliance.

Current Strategies

The Intercollegiate Athletic program added women's tennis in the fall of 2005, which enables the athletic program to maintain compliance in the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference. The UMC Athletic Department applied and was awarded a NCAA Coaching Enhancement Grant (\$15,000 per year for 2 years) in order to secure funding for a Head Women's Tennis position.

In a coordinated effort by the Athletic Department and the UMC Teambacker organization, a full-time athletic fundraiser position was proposed in spring 2005. The position was approved by the UMC administration in August of 2005 and since then the UMC Development Office has hired a person on an annual contract agreement. Funding for this position comes primarily from the Teambacker organization.

Athletic scholarships have increased by \$54,000 for 2006-07 season, which brings the scholarship total to \$366,000.

Funding was secured to renovate the fitness center, which was completed in the spring of 2006.

Near Term Changes

The UMC administration secured Higher Education Asset Preservation and Replacement (HEAPR) funding to complete the football field and track complex upgrades. The project is scheduled to start in the spring of 2007 and when finished will include ticket, restrooms and a concession area.

Longer Term, High Impact Changes

The Knutson gymnasium was renovated in the mid 1980's to provide a fitness area for students, but in order to improve and maintain the highest quality intramural, recreational and programming opportunities the University of Minnesota, Crookston goal is to encourage the development of a state-of-the-art facility to ensure students' needs are being met. As students are demanding more in the areas of fitness and wellness we need to be able to be competitive with other universities in the region and offer a facility that is up-to-date.

A new fitness-recreation center could provide UMC with an indoor track, additional activity courts for basketball, volleyball, tennis, indoor ice rink, pool, climbing wall, additional cardiovascular and weight-lifting machines as well as an aerobic (dance) facility.

A fitness assessment program could also be offered, which would include a fitness level test, a body composition test, blood pressure screening, a nutrition consultation and an exercise program designed for individuals.

Aerobics classes could be held throughout the year, which could include; low-impact, high-low impact, toning, cross conditioning, yoga, stability ball, Pilates and others.

UMC is currently working with the city of Crookston in a collaborative effort to fund a community/wellness/recreation center. Plans are to secure bonding in 2008 for the project.

NCAA Division II Membership Key Points

1. Geographic Location

Due to the geographic location of UMC, we are in an excellent region to participate with other nearby NCAA II institutions (NSIC and NCC). The proximity of these institutions helps to keep travel costs to a minimum.



2. Media Recognition

Being a part of the NSIC provides weekly exposure through the Northern Sun Spotlight radio show, which is broadcasted throughout five states in the Midwest; North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska. There is more media recognition for institutions participating in NCAA Division II than there is at the NCAA Division III or NAIA levels. Currently UMC is participating as a NCAA Division II member which has given the institution a tremendous amount of publicity that can not be measured by dollars. In 2006, Winona State (NSIC member) won the NCAA Division II Men's Basketball National Championship giving not only the NSIC national recognition but also affiliated members including the Crookston campus.

3. Recruiting

Recruiting is enhanced by the opportunity for student athletes to receive an athletic scholarship. Approximately 130 of 280 athletes that play an intercollegiate sport receive an allotment of athletic scholarship (totaling over \$300,000). The majority of athletes at UMC would not be here without athletic aid. Approximately 70 student-athletes in our Hockey and Equine programs do not receive athletic aid. Equestrian is considered to be an emerging sport in NCAA Division II and Hockey participates at the Division III level, where athletic scholarship allocations are not permitted.

4. Academic Offerings

The ability to offer athletic scholarships is important to recruiting and retaining students at UMC. Because the Crookston campus has a limited number of academic majors, retention becomes difficult when athletic scholarship options are not available.

5. Fundraising

The UMC Teambackers, the athletic fundraising arm, raises an average of approximately \$150,000 annually which is designated to operating budgets, salary and about 50 percent is designated to athletic scholarships.

6. Student Athlete Experience

Some of the experience that athletes receive at UMC's current level includes:

- a. Playing in the best professional, NCAA Division I and Division II venues in the country (Williams Arena, Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome, Alerus Center, Ralph Engelstad Arena, etc)
- b. Playing against some of the top NCAA Division II teams in the country
- c. Experience of playing in front of over 10,000 fans
- d. There are challenges due to the competitiveness of the teams which is also a factor in student athlete experience

7. Sport Sponsorship Requirements

NCAA Division II requires a minimum of 10 sports for sponsorship.

8. NCAA Money

The NCAA returns approximately \$80,000 (\$8,000 per/institution) to the NSIC as part of an enhancement fund. The NSIC conference office uses the enhancement funds to provide better services for student athletes and training for coaches and administrators alike. The NSIC also distributes grant funds to each school; \$1,600 for CPR certification, \$4,500 academic enhancements for student athlete's tutoring, etc., \$300 student athlete training, \$250 Student Athletic Advisory Committee.

UMC has also been awarded two grants from NCAA Division II; the Strategic Alliance Matching Grant program, which enabled UMC to hire a full-time Assistant Athletic Director and this past year, received a coaching enhancement grant for \$15,000 a year for two years

in which we were able to hire a Head Women's Tennis/Assistant Women's Basketball Coach.

9. University of Minnesota

With the departure of the University of Minnesota, Duluth and the University of Minnesota, Morris from the NSIC, UMC has the only University of Minnesota presence in the NSIC. This is advantageous in recruiting.

10. Diversity

NCAA Division II athletics brings diversity to the UMC campus. According to Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, 42 percent of all students of color on the UMC campus have been recruited by coaches in various athletic programs and participate in varsity competition.