



## Committee on Student Fees and Budget Review

### UNIT REPORT: RECREATIONAL SPORTS

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#### Introduction to the Unit

Recreational Sports (RecSports) provides facilities and instruction in both group and individual exercise and administers the club and intramural sports programs. UC Berkeley students, faculty, and even members of the Berkeley community use RecSports' exercise services.

RecSports currently receives two campus-based fees from past student referendums: one, a referendum of \$28.50 per student was passed in 1981 to primarily to pay for the mortgage of the RSF building, and another in 2006 adding an additional \$55 per student to help finance its daily operations. These two fees crucially support RecSports as the Unit does not receive State funding, and must continually repay the University for previous debt incurred for capital projects.

RecSports pays the University \$244,000 annually in debt repayment, and has done so successfully for the past 9 consecutive years. However, the Unit is concerned about upcoming playlists in the next few years. Although its mortgage payments for the RSF are nearly complete, the Unit is now facing payments on loans incurred to build the California Memorial Stadium Gym (CMS).

#### Unit Director Meeting Findings

On November 18, 2015, Dan Flood and Ryan Irwin of CSF met with the Director of RecSports, Mike Weinberg, and Associate Director of Finance and Communication, Loretta Ezeife. The conversation focused on the Wellness Referendum, upcoming challenges, and the financial goals of RecSports.

Mr. Weinberg discussed the new Wellness Referendum, which was passed in order to replace the current funding coming from 1981 referendum to build the RSF as well as the 2006 referendum for RecSports operations. RecSports will not receive funding from the new Wellness Referendum until

2016, when the 2006 referendum expires. Under the Wellness Referendum, the \$10 membership fee has been eliminated and created a program for individuals with severe injuries called “Not Limits.” RecSports received \$150k for the “No Limits” program of the \$1.3M of unallocated funds that are included in the Wellness Referendum. RecSports was also granted \$200k to investigate two projects that it hopes will enhance the student experience at the RSF. RecSports is currently conducting research on the feasibility of expanding the RSF by 3000 sq. ft. towards Bancroft, creating room for several additional treadmills on the second floor. They are also conducting a second study for a proposed remodel of the locker rooms that would create several private dressing rooms for LGBT individuals as well as those who seek greater privacy.

RecSports is facing several upcoming challenges including minimum wage increases, rising maintenance costs, and budget cuts across the board. The new Berkeley minimum wage mandates are expected to increase the RSF between \$120-\$200k, as the increase will force wages to be escalated all the way up the chain. Cardio equipment maintenance has steadily gone up over the past several years, which has prompted Mr. Weinberg and his staff to look into leasing treadmills rather than purchasing them new and paying expensive maintenance and repair bills. The RSF is looking into hard wiring all new treadmills, which will be costly but substantially improve wireless Internet speeds, which are currently slow. Vice Chancellor John Wilton has requested that all units cut their budgets by 1-2% this fiscal year, even though RecSports ran a 100k surplus. This year, RecSports has been repositioned underneath the University Business Partnerships and Services under VCAF John Wilton. The goal of this is to secure more funding for RecSports through selling sponsorships. Mr. Weinberg and the CSF representatives discussed the possibility of receiving private-funding from corporate sponsorship in exchange for corporate signage, space at events, and logos on t-shirts.

RecSports currently receives \$600,000 in Student Services fee funding, which is approximately 5% of their total budget of \$12 million. Mr. Weinberg emphasized that this funding has been gradually decreasing, and has been as high as \$1.5 million in the past. If more funding were allocated, RecSports would try and renew the cardio machines in the RSF, as well as pursue facility expansion. Mr. Weinberg hopes to create a reservation system for the cardio machines, so that users could check availability beforehand, and reserve a spot at a machine at a specific time in order to reduce queue times. Additional funding could assist in the creation of real time usage data, so users would know how crowded the gym is at any certain time.

### **Compliance with Guidelines**

The SSF guidelines indicate that the student services fee is intended for use for, but not limited to: services related to psychological health and well-being of students, social and recreational programs, services related to campus life and community, and career support.

RecSports is in compliance with SSF guidelines. The Unit provide a service that “directly benefits students” while not serving “a core instructional purpose”. Exercise promotes “physical and psychological health and well-being”, and the programs offered by RecSports provide a forum for “social, recreational” activities. The new referendum fee contains a return to aid, ensuring it is in compliance with the new SSF guidelines.

## **Preliminary Recommendations**

CSF highly recommends that RecSports receive an increased allocation from the Student Services Fee. RecSports serves thousands of students every year, and its services promote physical health, which is fundamental to a student's experience at the University. Additionally, countless surveys have showed that regular exercise is just as effective at improving mental health as traditional mental health services.

While the campus does provide RecSports with funding, the funding received is less than 50% of the funding provided to Intercollegiate Athletics despite the disparity between the sizes of their respective target populations – 900 students for Intercollegiate Athletics, and a large majority of the campus population for RecSports.

If the available facility space at RecSports was divided among the students that use its services, each student would have on average about 2 square feet, which is much smaller in comparison to most other Division-I schools that have about 9. Increased funding to RecSports would assist in expanding the available programs, services, and facilities available and would directly help improve the physical health of UC Berkeley students.