



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 for both group and individual exercise and administers the club and intramural sports programs. UC Berkeley students, faculty, and members of the surrounding Berkeley community use RecSports' variety of services.

RecSports currently receives student fees from the Wellness Referendum, which is targeted at supporting the physical and mental health of the student body. Student fees are critical to RecSports, as the Unit does not receive funding from the California state government, and must continually repay the University for previous debt incurred for capital projects.

RecSports pays the University \$244k annually in debt repayment, and has done so successfully for the past 10 consecutive years. However, the Unit is concerned about upcoming rent increases for memorial gym in the next year. 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). In addition, as one of the most universally used units on campus, RecSports faces a tremendous maintenance burden on both its equipment and facilities.

Unit Director Meeting Findings

On November 28, 2017, Ryan Irwin and Jackson Engles of CSF, met with the Interim Director of RecSports, Brigette Lossing, as well as Campus Budget Analyst David Whiteneck and Financial Manager Brian Tillinghast. The conversation focused the challenges and goals of RecSports as well as the unit's shift under the Student Affairs umbrella.

Ms. Lossing discussed the necessity of student fees for the operations of RecSports, and that RecSports is responsible for raising an even greater percentage of its 2017 budget than in 2016.

RecSports estimates that it is currently paying its employees in between 5-15% below market rate, which will be re-evaluated in 2018 and likely result in a substantial operating expense increase. The new Berkeley minimum wage has resulted in an increase of RSF wage expense by \$60k over the 2016-2017 period. The increase has forced wages to be escalated all the way up to the manager level. Other expenses in the RecSports pipeline include a new roof, the re-plastering of Strawberry Canyon pool, and required maintenance. RecSports is currently paying Intercollegiate Athletics 80k in rent for the memorial stadium gym, which will increase to 140k during 2018. The initiative to push the RSF toward Bancroft was voted down after estimated costs of the project heavily outweighed the benefits. Funding from the Wellness fund was allocated to the redesign of the locker room, which will break ground in Spring 2018 and include a section for gender neutral bathrooms.

Ms. Lossing discussed proposing initiatives in conjunction with University housing in which new residence halls have small gyms in the building that residents can use with ease. The location of the RSF is landlocked and thus it makes sense to add new smaller gyms in residence halls rather than add on to the current RSF building. The RecSports team is focused on its mission of the student experience, which not only includes superior exercise equipment for students but also mental health initiatives to promote healthy minds and bodies. Ms. Lossing is currently serving as interim director of RecSports, as a team looks for a new Director, which will hopefully be concluded during 2018.

In the past five years RecSports has received as much as \$600k in Student Services fee funding, however, over the last three years this total has steadily declined to just over \$350K. SSF support makes up approximately 2.5% of their total budget of \$14mm. This decrease is a result of a permanent budget reduction from the campus in the amount of \$239K. Ms. Lossing emphasized that this funding has been gradually decreasing, and has been as high as \$1.5mm in the past. If more funding were allocated, RecSports would try to meet deferred maintenance requirements on equipment and facilities, as well as implement greater programming to fit student's needs.

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. Current interim director Ms. Lossing and previous director Mr. Weinberg have stated that the current budget capital raising model is unsustainable, and without substantive change, it will result in both the diminishment of program quality as well as the layoff of staff crucial to RecSports operations.

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 two square feet, which is much smaller in comparison to most other Division-I schools that have about nine square feet. 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.

We sincerely believe that an increase to RecSports funding is an absolute necessity this year to maintain the Berkeley standard for student experience.