

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO

**Written institutional responses to the Athletics Competitiveness and Benchmarking Study by CSS** - including how the institutions plans to implement the recommendations in the study

The Collegiate Sports Solutions (CSS) benchmark study verified and provided clarity to our focus on the necessary steps for Nevada Athletics to grow within the increasingly challenging competitive environment of the Mountain West Conference.

We agree wholeheartedly with the four recommendations provided by CSS. Prior to the CSS study, and subsequent to the release of the study, Nevada Athletics has followed the recommended pathway recommendations in the following ways:

- *Hiring and Retention of Quality Coaches. When coaches demonstrate competitive success, it is essential that an investment be made in retaining these top individuals. Improving and restructuring contracts to reflect an institutional commitment, and possessing the ability to do so in a timely and efficient manner are critical features in sustaining long-term success.*

In recent years, Nevada Athletics hired a number of head coaches who are enjoying higher levels of competitive success. Nevada Athletics has invested in these coaches with extended contracts and in some cases additional compensation.

- Women's Golf: extended contract to three years
- Women's Volleyball: extended contract to three years, increase compensation, courtesy vehicle for assistant coaches
- Baseball: extended contract to three years
- Men's Basketball: new five year contract, increase compensation

These contract extensions and additional compensation follow the recommendation to hire and retain quality coaches. We will continue to hire great coaches and work hard to retain coaches as they enjoy higher levels of success.

- *Student-Athlete Experience. Focus should be placed on implementing and maintaining a first class student-athlete experience. Building and maintaining high-quality internal facilities (practice venues, academic areas, medical and training areas, strength and conditioning facilities, locker rooms, etc.) with the goal of providing the very best for the student-athletes can oftentimes be more important than the primary competition venue. Maintaining and consistently acting on plans to improve these facilities are essential to the overall recruitment and retention of student-athletes. Fully funding enhanced student-athlete benefit areas that may be the result of future NCAA legislation or litigation will continue to be of prime importance.*

Nevada Athletics is focused on maintaining a first class student experience. As noted in the CSS study, a central focus is building and maintaining high-quality facilities to serve and support the student athlete experience. The following investments in the last two years illustrate our commitment to providing high-quality practice, competition and student support facilities:

- New outdoor tennis courts
- New practice field artificial turf surface
- Resurfaced Mackay Stadium track
- New track team jump and field events site
- Additional basketball goals in Virginia Street Gym
- New basketball floor and additional basketball goals in Lawlor Events Center
- Renovated locker rooms for women's soccer, women's track, women's basketball, men's basketball and football
- New indoor golf hitting bays
- New basketball practice center
- New strength and conditioning and nutrition center
- Enhancements and new computers in Marguerite Wattis Petersen Academic Center

These facilities provide a first class student athlete experience and allow our coaches to recruit highly talented students which matches the recommendation provided in the CSS study.

- *Revenue Production. To support enhanced spending in these areas, the athletic departments must continue to focus on ways to enhance their respective revenue bases, maximizing current revenue streams, and identifying potential new revenue streams, while continuing to rely on substantive university financial support. Moving budgets to a level at or above the MWC median should be a financial goal.*

Nevada Athletics is focused on increasing revenues in all areas. In recent years, the following actions resulted in additional or increased revenue to support our operation:

- Mackay Stadium renovation created new revenue growth opportunities with new chair back seats, club level seating and enhanced indoor/outdoor suites on the east side of the stadium. Each of these premium seating options resulted in significant new revenue for the department.
- Extended and renegotiated Multi Media Rights contract which resulted in additional guaranteed rights fee, additional revenue sharing opportunity and new scoreboards in Lawlor Events Center and Mackay Stadium.
- New contracted licensing partnership will grow licensing revenue.
- Enhanced ticket revenue in men's basketball resulting from recent competitive success.

We focus constantly on enhancing current revenue streams while developing new opportunities. Moving to the MWC median annual budget, as suggested in this recommendation, is a stretch goal for Nevada Athletics. According to the CSS study, the average revenue/budget in the MWC is almost \$39 million per year while Nevada's budget is at the bottom of the MWC with reportedly \$26,954,000. We work hard to grow our revenue but a 50% increase will be hard to accomplish.

- *Strategic Planning. Over the next five years, Nevada and UNLV will need to formulate and then implement strategic plans to show overall institutional and athletic growth if there is interest in pursuing membership opportunities that may occur in a "power five" conference.*

Nevada Athletics has a strategic plan which is focused on serving and supporting the educational mission of the University of Nevada, Reno. We are currently building a new short-term operations plan which will include more tactical operating goals for our department.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the CSS study. We are pleased to see the recommendations align closely with our previously established operating and strategic initiatives.