

Courting New Students

Basketball and football garner most of the headlines. Expansive television contracts and the latest technologies have helped bring more athletic events to interested people across the country and the world. Many women's sports have soared in popularity. With those factors and others in mind, we asked representatives of four Indiana universities:

What is the impact of intercollegiate sports on student recruitment?

Ball State Transforms Athletics Into Academic Opportunities

By Terry King

Ferretting out the exact value of intercollegiate athletics is controversial, complex and multifaceted. Like other aspects of the academic/athletic relationship, the value can reach well past the court and field if there is an intentional effort to create positive student learning outcomes.

Ball State's 19 Division I teams provide ample opportunity for students to work on real-world projects. Through Sports Link (see more on Page 46), an Emmy Award-winning immersive learning project, we offer students a transformative experience that delivers game-day excitement to audiences across the nation. Students run the show. In addition to being on-air talent, they produce, write, record and edit the packages.

In 2010, the interdisciplinary student organization partnered with Fox College Sports to bring magazine shows and live coverage of Ball State sporting events to nearly 56 million homes in the nation's top 25 television markets.

Sports Link is an example of how Ball State leverages athletics for academic purposes. It provides real-life problem solving opportunities where students synthesize and integrate traditional academic information. They learn to transform information into judgment and judgment into action.

Higher education officials talk about the increased benefit in visibility that athletic success can bring, usually resulting in a spike in applications. That's true. We saw it in 2008.

We know a similar increase in matriculates comes only when the university has an equally compelling academic appeal. We are intentional when it comes to maximizing the academic benefit of our athletics programs. The strides we have made in increasing the academic quality of our student body in recent years is evidence that prospective students recognize and appreciate such innovation.



Terry King is provost and vice president for academic affairs at Ball State University (www.bsu.edu).



Student Comes First in 'Student-Athlete' Experience

By Morgan Burke

Anyone who has been to Purdue to watch Big Ten sports knows that the excitement is palpable and contagious. When you hear the chant "Boiler Up!" you know you are part of something dynamic and very special.

That excitement is a magnet for prospective students, and once they are here it helps them meld into the Purdue family that will welcome them the rest of their lives. The Big Ten and NCAA Division I culture and atmosphere are an important part of student success and the total campus experience, which is a part of the overall attraction for many students.

Being on national television on a regular basis also builds awareness of your institution and brand. Everyone knows something about you and knows you literally play with and are associated with other outstanding institutions. The features we are allowed to broadcast about our students and faculty during the games are also fantastic opportunities to showcase all aspects of Purdue.

Athletic successes – especially championships, tournament wins and participation in bowl games – also provide great publicity. After Butler University advanced to the title game of the Final Four or Purdue earned a berth to the Rose Bowl, applications went through the roof. The strongest message, though, is when athletic success is coupled with sustained academic excellence and success.

That's a point of pride for Purdue. Our athletes are great students, too. That's why we call them "student-athletes." The word student comes first. At the conclusion of the spring 2010 semester, our student-athletes achieved a record 3.04 cumulative grade-point average and performed better than the university student body average for the 26th consecutive semester.



Morgan Burke is the director of intercollegiate athletics at Purdue University (www.purdue.edu).



Butler Finds Admissions Success Follows Athletic Success

By Tom Weede

To raise your university's profile and help attract new students, few things in this world beat having your basketball team play in the NCAA Division I National Championship game.

For three weeks last spring, much of the country watched Butler University, our 4,000-student school, beat bigger, better-known teams from Texas-El Paso, Murray State, Syracuse, Kansas State and Michigan State before falling to Duke by two points in the final game. It made for a great story – part Cinderella, part recognition of a small school that takes the phrase “student-athletes” seriously.

Although all applications for admission had been filed and all admission decisions had been made before the NCAA tournament began, the publicity and success helped us yield our largest freshman class ever: 1,049 students. More students accepted our offer of admission, thanks at least in part to Butler's increased visibility.

We expect the bigger impact of our team's success to be felt in the class that will enter in the fall of 2011. Visits to our six colleges' open-house programs are up around 65% compared with last year. For our regular campus visits, we're up 25%. Applications are 40% ahead of last year.

The challenge is that we can't take more students. In fact, we need fewer students than we had this past year. We want a freshman class of about 1,000, which means we're not going to be admitting more students. We think Butler is already a good place, and we don't want to significantly change our academic profile. If we were to admit just the top of this year's applicant pool, we could see a significant reduction in the number of students who traditionally choose Butler. And we don't want to turn away from students who, in the past, would have enrolled.

We think the story of our success in the NCAA tournament will have some resonance going forward. But in the mind of a high school sophomore or junior, it won't last long. The key will be making the most of this opportunity to burnish our already strong reputation. All of us at Butler will be pleased if that happens.



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Tom Weede is vice president of enrollment management at Butler University (www.butler.edu) in Indianapolis.

Competitions Contribute to Vibrant Campus Atmosphere

By Boyd Bradshaw

Sports bring people together. This ability for athletic competition to unite a community existed even before the ancient Olympic games started nearly 3,000 years ago, and at Valparaiso University we see the powerful impact that intercollegiate sports make within our community. Valpo's combination of outstanding Division I athletics programs and student-athletes dedicated to being champions in the classroom, in the community and in competition contributes much to our distinctive living and learning environment.

Intercollegiate athletics adds to the exciting array of activities offered at Valpo, and with 19 Division I teams there are numerous opportunities for students, faculty, staff, alumni, community members and prospective students to have fun and build relationships. A vibrant campus atmosphere is an essential aspect of the college experience, and giving a prospective student an opportunity to experience this excitement during a campus visit often weighs heavily in his or her decision.

Strong academics also attract successful student-athletes such as 2010 Valpo chemistry graduate Lindsey Gilman. The three-sport student-athlete, the winner of a prestigious fellowship for young scholars who have demonstrated the potential to solve the world's energy needs, is now pursuing her Ph.D. in nuclear engineering at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Learning takes place both inside and outside the classroom. At Valpo, nearly 400 students chose to become Crusaders in large part because they value the ability to pursue a personal journey of discovery and growth that combines Division I athletics, with its opportunities for leadership and teamwork, and close interaction with outstanding professors.

Valpo's sports programs also play an important role in expanding the university's name recognition, reputation and affinity throughout the country and beyond. Alumni and parents cheer on Crusader teams playing from coast to coast, while the publicity generated through a successful athletics program prompts many prospective students to find out more about our institution. Showcasing Valpo and the high quality evident in all aspects of the Valpo experience is a critical element in recruiting students who want to be part of a community dedicated to excellence.



**Valparaiso
University**

Boyd Bradshaw is vice president of enrollment management at Valparaiso University (www.valpo.edu).