

## Student Athletes Briefing

### BACKGROUND

Certified by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), Oregon State University participates in the NCAA Division I Bowl Championship Subdivision as a member of the Pac-12 Conference (Pac-12). OSU sponsors 16 varsity sports (plus men's rowing): baseball (men), basketball (men and women), cross country (women), football (men), golf (men and women), gymnastics (women), rowing (men and women), soccer (men and women), softball (women), indoor and outdoor track and field (women), volleyball (women), and wrestling (men).

The Department of Intercollegiate Athletics (Athletics) focuses on the holistic growth of its 500+ student-athletes through academic and athletic excellence in a progressive and inclusive environment of mutual respect. In February 2018, Athletics unveiled the [Build the Dam Strategic Plan](#), a five-year plan which includes six strategic goals consistent with the mission and core themes/values described in the University's strategic plan, SP4.0.

### CONNECTION TO SP4.0

The planning process for Athletics' strategic plan and SP4.0 occurred at roughly the same time. In order to ensure strategic partnership and strong alignment between the two plans, Athletics engaged with university senior leaders and staff as it built its plan. Athletics' strategic plan includes six goals:

1. Lead the country in holistic student-athlete development, measured by graduation, academic achievement, student-athlete wellness, and post-graduation success.
2. Win championships, achieve post-season success, and attain national recognition annually in all sports.
3. Generate the funds necessary to accomplish our strategic goals and align resources to achieve financial sustainability.
4. Demonstrate inclusive excellence by advancing diversity and equity in all that we do.
5. Activate Beaver Nation through strategic partnerships with our campus, our community, the Beaver State, and the world.
6. Invest in the facilities and infrastructure necessary to compete at the highest level.

### METRICS

Athletics is guided by the multiple objectives and strategies identified within the strategic plan including specific actions and metrics identified to ensure objectives are met.

### KEY INITIATIVES, PROJECTS, AND/OR PRIORITIES

#### **Financial Sustainability Plan**

[The Financial Sustainability Plan](#) for Athletics was adopted in the fall of 2016 to deal with an annual operating deficit that had grown to over \$9M. Revenue growth and budget reduction measures, including the discontinuation of a sport in 2018, have helped reduce the deficit. By the end of FY2019, the annual deficit had been reduced to \$1.3M, with further reduction projected for FY2020.

The impacts of COVID-19 were substantial. Athletics experienced significant unplanned revenue shortfalls with the cancelation of the 2020 men's basketball tournament and the spring seasons. Even with these challenges, Athletics ended the year within \$1M of its original budget. Revenues were short by \$6.5M but the unit was able to mitigate the majority of that by reducing some employees' FTE, non-renewing employees, and implementing a freeze on spending and hiring.

More recently, Athletics developed a ten-year forecast that considers more tangible revenue opportunities going forward as well as a gradual ramp up back to normal revenues and conservative expense growth. FY2022 is projected to be an additional year of operational losses because of the potential revenue shortfalls. Normal operations are projected to resume in FY2023. Included in the ten-year plan is repayment of a \$35M deficit from the FY2021 year. The projection includes a significant increase in broadcast revenues in FY2024, the establishment of an annual \$1M contingency fund by FY2024, and the debt service and operating costs associated with the completion of Reser Stadium. The losses in FY2021 and FY2022 will require cash management strategies in the short-term but the longer-term trajectory has Athletics back on track to meet the expectations for financial sustainability.

### **Student-Athlete Success**

In the 2020-21 academic year to date, OSU's student-athletes have performed well during these challenging times.

In fall 2020, all teams earned a GPA greater than 3.0. The combined GPA of 3.35 equaled that of the general fulltime student population. In winter 2021, fifteen of the sixteen teams earned a GPA greater than 3.0, and once again the student-athletes matched the GPA of the general fulltime student population. All teams have a 3.0+ cumulative OSU GPA. The top academic teams this year have been women's golf in fall with a 3.8327 GPA, and women's cross country in winter with a 3.8106 GPA.

Additionally, 40% of the student-athletes earned Honor Roll status both terms.

There are student-athletes in all academic colleges, pursuing sixty-three different majors. The College of Business is the most popular choice for student-athletes, followed by the College of Liberal Arts. Currently, twenty-one student-athletes are pursuing a master's degree.

As we look toward a return to campus, Athletics is creating outreach and orientation programs for all teams that will help with students' reentry to campus life. We will work with campus partners in these efforts, as well as support groups in Athletics.

Lastly, the BEST program (Bridge Encouraging Successful Transition) will take place for incoming student-athletes this summer. Entering its sixteenth year, BEST offers new student-athletes an orientation to campus, an introduction to the culture of OSU, and credits toward their degrees.

### **Student-Athlete Support and Programming**

The holistic development of OSU's student-athletes is the cornerstone of the program and Athletics takes pride in the opportunities it provides through robust programming. Below is an update of recent and current efforts as Athletics has made major adjustments due to the pandemic and related restrictions.

**Wellness Initiatives**

- Quarterly wellness checks by athletic trainers with all student-athletes
- Resources for student-athletes who identify as food insecure
- Beavs Connected, a new group led by Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) for student-athletes who are learning to adapt to “the new normal”
- Additional hours from our sport psychologist to assist student-athletes who are adapting to the COVID restrictions in place
- The addition of short, weekly webinars from our dietician to assist student-athletes with their nutritional needs
- Several initiatives put in place for both home events and during travel for student-athletes to ensure that COVID protocols are followed as well as eliminating close contact and exposure

**Academic Support**

- Tutoring via Zoom sessions
- Mentoring groups via Zoom sessions
- Meetings with learning specialists via Zoom sessions
- Counselors have weekly 1-on-1 Zoom sessions with student-athletes to track and monitor grades and progress

**Student-Athlete Development**

- 1-on-1 Zoom sessions to help track progress on graduate school applications, resume development, internship/job placement, LinkedIn development, and connecting to the Beaver Athlete Network
- The Student-Athlete Development office has also engaged with several employers to research and develop internship and job opportunities for the current hiring cycle
- Weekly Zoom sessions for both personal and professional development
- Other clubs/groups that remain active during COVID-19: Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, Real Talk, Beaver Athlete Sustainability Team, International Student-Athlete Club and BeavsBeTrue
- Dam Change is the newest group developed by our Black student-athlete leaders to bring awareness and exposure to racism and discrimination in our society
- Beaver Advocates, created this year, works within each team to learn more about bystander intervention and resources for survivors. Their role is to share this information and be a leader to the administration and with SARC to ensure that student-athletes know what to do if faced with a traumatic situation that could result from sexual violence.
- Community Engagement: We launched a virtual reading group where student-athletes read children’s books via Zoom sessions. We were able to do this with both English and Spanish speaking classes at local elementary schools and the Corvallis library.

Other student support includes a mentorship program, the Beaver Athlete Network, which has seen considerable success due to the implementation of a new delivery platform that allows for better tracking of growth and outcomes.

Athletics also continues to support [#DamWorthIt](#), a program created for student-athletes by student-athletes to help remove the stigma around mental health issues. #DamWorthIt is a program designed and developed by two former OSU student-athletes who dealt with tragedies on their teams (suicide by teammates) while competing at Oregon State. The program has blossomed throughout the university and it is now accessible to the general student population. Additionally, #DamWorthIt has become incorporated and will be expanding to include branches at high schools in Oregon and around the country at various institutions.

Athletics also has rejuvenated its focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Its Diversity Inclusion Working Group (DIWG) which incorporates nearly 50 members from various campus entities and athletic department employees and student-athletes has been recreated, with subcommittee themes including Student-Athletes, Women in Sport, Campus and Community Engagement, Education, Hiring and Retention, and Identities and Affinities. The goal is to increase awareness and resources for all staff and specifically women and staff of color.

### **Facilities Master Plan**

In collaboration with university leadership and Capital Planning and Development, the Athletics Facility Master Plan was substantially completed in the spring of 2019. The master plan has proven to be a valuable tool in assigning priority to key projects, developing collateral for fundraising, and informing design efforts on further capital construction that benefits the experience of student-athletes.

Since its inception, the facilities master plan has led to over \$28M of completed construction. Of particular note in these efforts has been Athletics' focus on prioritizing gender equity among facility resources. These efforts have led to \$14M of completed construction assigned specifically to facilities that exclusively benefit female athletes. Some key projects in this effort include the recent completion of the Gymnastics Practice Facility, upgrades to Kelly Field at the OSU Softball Complex, and the renovation of the locker room serving Women's Basketball.

### **Completing Reser Stadium**

The completion of Reser Stadium is a priority in the OSU Ten-Year Capital Forecast and the Athletics Facility Master Plan. Guiding principles for the project include:

- Providing additional infrastructure (restrooms, concessions, etc.) that enhance the fan experience and the recruiting atmosphere
- Integrating vibrant 365-day student-centered programming on the west side with potential public/private partnerships that benefit the university and community
- Building additional premium seating options and enhancing annual revenue streams/opportunities
- Creating a continuous main concourse that will promote community and ease of stadium access
- Providing seismic improvements

The positive momentum for the project has continued since the completion of the schematic design, stage gate one approval, and the subsequent public announcement in January both in the areas of charitable donations to the project and further design and development efforts. The

Board of Trustees will consider advancing the project to the construction phase during this May meeting.

### **Fundraising**

Fundraising allows for programs and priority initiatives to grow as well as providing for a broad-based program with more resources for our student-athletes. Primary fundraising goals include:

**Goal 1:** Successfully meet the Completing Reser Stadium philanthropic goal

**Goal 2:** Focus on engaging 40% of Our Beaver Nation donors to make gifts to Athletics that are not related to seating or parking contributions

**Goal 3:** Increase stewardship and communication efforts at all levels through increased communication and clarity around processes. This will be measured by increased activity and expanded reach

While many of Athletics' fundraising efforts are broad, like those mentioned above, there are also very specific fundraising goals and initiatives targeted towards specific programs, projects and initiatives designed to advance the Athletics Facility Master Plan. They include:

- Raise \$85M for Completing Reser Stadium by July 2021 (launched fundraising initiative in February with \$64.5M committed)
- Raise \$3.5M toward the Whyte Track and Field Grandstands and Venue Transformation project (currently at \$2.363M)
- Raise \$2M toward the gymnastics practice facility (currently at \$1.8M)
- Raise \$1M toward the Lorenz Field grandstands (fundraising complete, 833K)
- Raise \$2.35M for the women's basketball locker room and team room (complete)
- Raise \$350K toward Gill Plaza renovations (complete)

### **OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS & NATIONAL TRENDS**

OSU's success in providing an environment for student-athletes to achieve their academic and athletic goals is, in part, impacted by national trends and issues. Sustaining excellence in our program requires continuous assessment and monitoring of trends or events that will affect our efforts.

### **COVID-19 Impacts**

COVID-19 continues to be a significant factor impacting Athletics, student-athletes, and fans. The athletic environment in Corvallis has done relatively well in terms of the incidence of infection. Expanding vaccine eligibility to include all individuals over age 16 will play a significant role in how Athletics may function in the coming year. Given OSU's recent decision to require vaccinations for those on campus, in Corvallis, and specifically within Athletics, the situation will improve favorably. Provided there are no new variants, the Pac-12 COVID Advisory Group and the NCAA COVID Advisory Group project a lessening on the burden of surveillance testing and permission of increased population density and decrease in social distancing this fall. There will remain fiscal pressures due to the costs of testing, mitigation, and attention to COVID 19. At all times, Athletics maintains that the number one priority continues to be the health, safety, and wellness of student-athletes.

Over the past year+, Athletics developed strong relationships with public health officials at the state and county levels as the university worked towards the safe resumption of activity. This included periodic meetings with the Oregon Health Authority and other state officials, and weekly meetings with public health officials in Lane and Benton Counties. These meetings led to a streamlined effort for resumption exceptions and approvals that allowed Oregon State to be a leader in responsibly hosting regional competitions, including championship competition and other multi-team events. Additionally, the University's collective efforts prepared Athletics to be immediately able to mobilize on new capacity allowances for spectators, while other intercollegiate peers delayed their openings.

### **Name, Image, and Likeness**

Name, image, and likeness (NIL)—the legal concept of “right of publicity”—continues to be a national topic that will change the landscape of intercollegiate athletics. On September 30, 2019, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed Senate Bill 206, also known as the “Fair Pay to Play Act.” The law prohibits the NCAA, conferences, or California-based schools from enforcing a rule that prevents a student-athlete from being compensated for the use of their name, image, or likeness (NIL). SB 206 also allows a student-athlete to engage an agent. Since that time, more than 30 states have introduced similar legislation and are considering these bills during their 2021 legislative sessions. To date, eight states have passed bills related to NIL, two of which are scheduled to take effect on July 1, 2021.

Oregon State Senate Bill 5 similarly proposes to lift NIL compensation restrictions, as well as introducing expanded opportunities for student-athletes to utilize professional agents. The bill also requires royalty payments for institutional team-related merchandise sales as well as premium payments for students whose NIL is utilized. This bill also has a proposed effective date of July 1, 2021. Congress is currently considering six pieces of legislation related to student-athletes rights and name, image, and likeness. A federal bill is preferred in order to create a single national standard for NIL that applies uniformly to all student-athletes and higher education institutions.

OSU Athletics has continued efforts to position this landmark shift in the industry as an opportunity for student-athletes and programs. To further advance those efforts, the department formed the Name, Image, Likeness Implementation Advisory Committee. Comprised of industry and campus experts, coaches, student-athletes and key alumni, this committee developed four key implementation and programming concepts related to the potential legislative changes related to NIL:

- Branding/Awareness
- Educational Initiatives
- Disclosure/Monitoring/Campus Alignment
- Marketplace Connection/Student-Athlete Advocacy

While much is still unknown about the institutional monitoring accountability inherent in the Oregon SB5, Athletics staff have utilized these focus areas to build a NIL Readiness program, partnering with third party NIL industry leader Opendorse, as well as the College of Business. Athletics has also leveraged key professional athlete alumnus relationships to further develop educational efforts in this space.