





BRINGING MODERN **AQUATIC CENTERS** TO YOUR CAMPUS

by Dennis R. Berkshire

With some predicting enrollment gains up to 10%, your institution is undoubtedly planning ways to get the best and brightest of these students onto your campus. As many Universities compete for the prize first-year and transfer students, they must find progressive and exciting amenities to attract discerning students.



For many students, the draw to a University campus can be the total package that an institution offers, including its quality of life on campus. These aquatic centers can be used for an array of activities beyond swimming, enriching both the university campus and students' lives.

These facilities have been used for student recruitment and the recruitment of student athletes, as well as for general campus recreation and socialization. They can serve Freshmen Orientations, Greek Life, Collegiate Sports, and as a General Fitness Center for all students. Additionally, of course, health and wellness is a popular and common thread among potential students and parents alike.

Serving the Majority of Your Students

Many Universities have aquatics centers to support collegiate swimming and water polo. A recent study found that of the thousands of high school swimmers, 7.9% of the boys and 8.3% of the girls will go on to swim in college. A recent Gallup Poll offers the following participation rate in exercise among college students: 30% participate in vigorous exercise, and 60% of students participate in moderate exercise. These statistics show us that a University Aquatic Center must serve not only the collegiate athletes but

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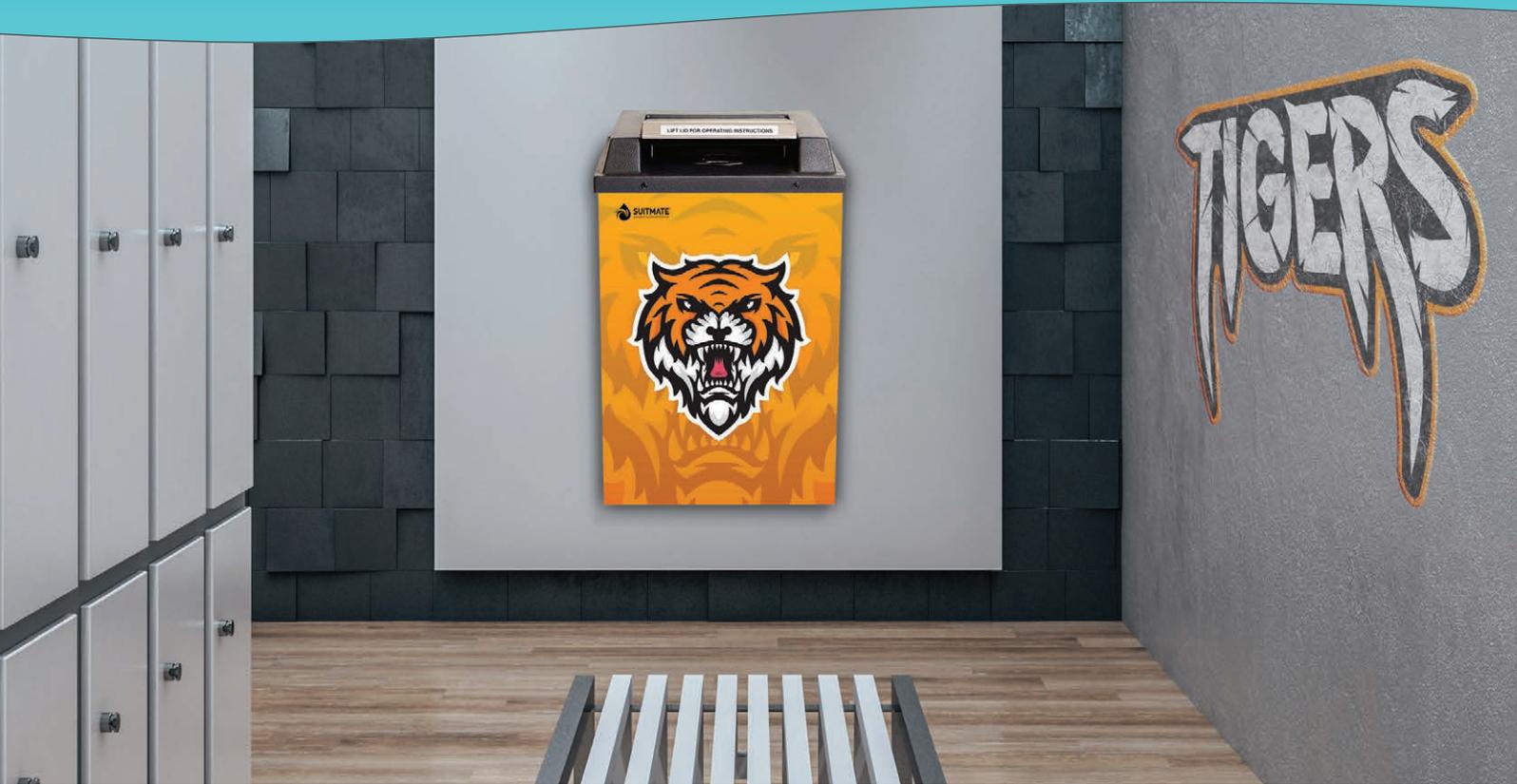
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the vast majority of the students as well. To that end, modern university aquatic centers are being built to serve the entire student body population along with faculty and staff. Therefore, modern aquatic centers must have amenities that can serve programs for the vigorous and moderate exerciser.

Traditional Growing Pains of Modern Aquatics Programs

A modern university aquatic center can include as many as 50 different programs. However, success in programs and popularity can come with challenges and growing pains. Swimming pools designed for competitive

programs such as swim teams, water polo, synchronized swimming, and diving require deep water pools. A competition pool should be a minimum 2-meters (6.7-feet) deep to provide a safe depth for diving into the pool.

Most recreation programs need swimming pools that have shallow water that allows bathers to stand and touch the floor. The trend in modern aquatics programming is to have deeper and deeper water for better and safer performance in competitive programs and more shallow water—in some cases even beach type entries—to support recreation programs. This trend has made many existing university swimming pools obsolete.

Challenges of Replacing Versus Renovating

Universities are then faced with the challenge of trying to renovate existing facilities or simply replacing them all together. To satisfy this trend, the new pool configuration is often multiple pools. One pool will be configured for competition programs, with deep water operating with cooler water temperatures of 78 to 80 degrees; a second pool will then be configured for recreation and fitness programs with shallower water operating with warmer water temperatures of 82 to 88 degrees. Even the competition pools have developed amenities for recreational use to reach out to the majority of students. For instance, inflatable obstacle courses and log rolling competitions are examples of recreation programs designed for deeper water pool use.

Demand for Water and Air Quality

Another challenge for a modern aquatic center is the level of use and the demand for water and air quality. Given the increase in programming, the facility has little, if any, down time to perform preventative maintenance. Most state codes require the swimming pool water to be recirculated within 6-hours or less; this is known as a 6-hour turnover rate. However, with heavy bather loads, this code minimum requirement may be inadequate.

Due to bather wastes, body oils, and sunscreen, the water may need to be circulated and filtered more often to maintain good water quality. It is not unusual to see a 2-hour to 4-hour turnover rate for a modern recreation pool. When trying to use an old existing pool for these new recreation programs and increased bather load, the underground pipes may not be large enough to support this flow rate. If a new recirculation system, filter system, and pool piping is required, then the facility needs to



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Your University Aquatic Center must serve not only the collegiate athletes but the vast majority of the students as well. Modern aquatic centers must have amenities that can serve programs for the vigorous and moderate exerciser. Whatever your needs and programs, a well-designed and operated aquatic center can be a bright attraction to your campus. It can add to the health and quality of life on campus and serve as a great recruiting component for both students and athletes.

determine if the existing pool will meet all of the programmatic needs versus a remove-and-replacement project given the relative comparative construction costs.

The bather loads and efficacy of the pool recirculation system can also have an impact on the natatorium air for indoor pools. As bather load wastes build up in the pool water, chemical reactions must occur that allow the waste products to be broken down and off-gassed into the natatorium air. Inadequate turnover rates

and chemical feed systems will result in poor air quality and a corrosive environment for the building and equipment.

Like the pool water, increased air turnover rates, along with improved air distribution, can help provide better air quality. As students strive for a better quality of life, they will not tolerate pool water or air quality that has occurred in old natatoriums and university pools. This space must be of the same quality as other spaces on campus, and it must be inviting to all the senses.

Modern Aquatic Centers Offer Both Variety and Excitement

In some instances, a modern aquatic center may have four different pool types with varying water depths and water temperatures. The Swimming Pool has water depths of 3'-6" to 13' or deeper, water temperatures of 78-84 degrees, and a turnover rate of six hours. An Adaptive Learning Pool has water depths of 2'-6" to 8' and water temperatures of 82-90 degrees with a two-to-four-hour turnover rate. Also with a two-to-four-hour turnover rate is a Multi-Purpose Pool, which has temperatures of 80-88 degrees and depths up to 5' or greater. Finally, a Spa has water depths of 3'-6" with water temperatures of 100-104 degrees and a twenty-to-thirty-minute turnover rate.

In recent university projects, we have seen as many as 28 water features and pool configurations. These features are often targeted to meet specific program needs and may include a lazy river, beach entry, spray features, bubble benches, lounging ledges, vortexes, rain rings, rope swings, climbing walls, zip lines, movie



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Adding a Bright and Welcoming Campus Attraction

Whatever your needs and programs, a well-designed and operated aquatic center can be a bright attraction to your campus. It can add to the health and quality of life on campus and serve as a great recruiting component for both students and athletes.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: As president of Aquatic Design Group, Inc., Dennis R. Berkshire has over 35 years of experience in the aquatics industry, with field experience in swimming pool design, construction and operation, and training. He has a strong background in water chemistry and has been involved in the design of automated filtration chemical feed and water chemistry control equipment.



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