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**FITNESS FLOORING  
SOUND  
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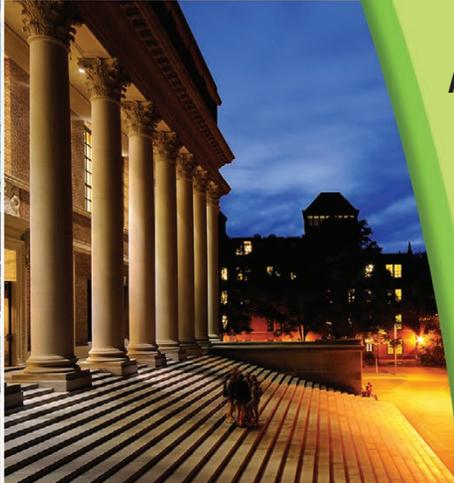
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# EDITOR'S LETTER

As I have continued to age, much to my chagrin—but still better than the alternative—I have come to realize how important fitness is to my enjoyment of life physically and how much recreation can help my mental state. Your campuses have taken these parts of your campus seriously for a long time. Students have also begun to require new and different facilities and equipment to meet their fitness and recreation needs. Due to your requests, we have once again delivered a special edition focused on the way to meet and exceed these expectations.

Fitness has changed, and new approaches to getting the most out of fitness routines has led to innovations to make it more accessible and targeted than ever before. Using this knowledge, campuses can achieve more participation and build a strong sense of community that is another step in the building of a strong and involved student body.

I recently joined a gym that is focused on building community while answering individual needs. The benefits that I have seen in my physical, mental, and emotional health have truly surprised me and led me to share my experience with others, hoping they will experience it as well. Recreation is another part of the student needs that your campuses meet in a multitude of ways. The importance of fun never goes away, and—as your students deal with the stress of many facets of college life—having a place to go and relieve stress is necessary for emotional wellbeing. Campus recreation programs are vital in helping them do just that.

One of the best things I have seen from caring private colleges and universities is the focus on the complete person. This balanced approach to learning and life carries a value that those exposed to it enjoy for the rest of their lives. This special edition contains helpful insight into how campuses can continue to improve facilities and enhance students' enjoyment.

Thank you again for sharing with us what you want to see us cover and allowing us to be a help to you along the way.

Ed Bauer

Publisher/Editor-in-Chief  
*Private University Products and News Magazine*  
ed@pupnmag.com



Ed Bauer  
*Publisher/Editor-in-Chief*  
ed@pupnmag.com

Lawrence Provenzano  
*Director of Client Development*

Hilary Moreno  
*Creative Director*

Lisa Gibbs, EdD  
Cynthia Mwenja, PhD  
*Staff Writers*

Nick Cusick  
Kevin Feldman  
Brennan Prins  
*Contributing Writers*

Cassidy Clevenger  
*Circulation*  
circulation@pupnmag.com



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Fax: 855-239-8093

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# Innovation & Fun **IN CAMPUS RECREATION**

by Lisa Gibbs

Covid-19 is slowly coming under control, and many campuses welcomed students back in person as the Fall 2021 semester got underway. With many protocols still in place—such as distancing, masking, pre-registering a time slot for fitness facilities, and grab-and-go meals—private colleges and universities have made every effort to safely return to campus life. Faculty, students, and staff no doubt were elated to return to physical human interaction after what seemed like a very long time of digital contact only.

One area of campus that fosters human interaction in a variety of ways is Campus Recreation. All students, regardless of major, have access to the amenities and activities offered by Campus Recreation and are encouraged to take advantage of the benefits of exercise and social interaction. These departments adapt and change their facility construction and programming as technology and popular culture shift over time. From LEED certified facilities to paddleboard yoga, campuses across the United States offer unique and fun ways for students to increase their physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Colby College in Waterville, Maine is committed to providing “all students with the opportunity to lead healthy and active lifestyles.” Their press release dated October 19, 2020, backed up that claim by describing the Harold Alfond Athletics and Recreation Center. Colby College states the new center is “the most advanced and comprehensive NCAA D-III facility in the country.” The recreation center is pursuing LEED Gold certification, a rarity in large-scale sports facilities. Achieving LEED certification will make the center the eighteenth building on campus with such a designation. According to the press release, Colby is one of only four institutions thus far to have achieved carbon neutrality, demonstrating their belief that a healthy lifestyle is connected to a healthy environment.

### Pool Innovations

Colby College is also home to the only Olympic-sized Myrtha pool in the state. Myrtha pools are built with patented technologies including stainless steel modular panels, which offer

strength to contain water and resistance to corrosion caused by chemicals used in swimming pools. Structural elements are bolted together instead of welded, and a PVC laminate is hot rolled onto the steel panels to ensure effective waterproofing. The construction of the pools contributes to LEED V4 credentials, BREEAM certification, and GreenStar designations. Additionally, the pool “will be the fastest pool in New England,” according to Athletics Director Mike Wisecup. Wisecup explained to News Center Maine that the pool is designed to remove wave resistance when swimmers turn and that the surface of the starting blocks is similar to that of an outdoor track. These innovations potentially lead to faster start and finish times for swimmers.

The first year on campus can be quite a transition from high school. Campus Recreation can ease that transition with engaging and fun activities. At St. Mary’s College of California in Moraga near the San Francisco Bay, Campus Recreation hosts “First Year Olympics” in the fall for first-year residents. Designed to promote

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residence hall involvement and pride, the halls compete with each other in a wide variety of games and sports. A unique feature is that students choose a specialty in which to compete. As a result, games and activities cross a wide array of interests, from board games to football and puzzles, to soccer. Since 2008, this event has increased sportsmanship and camaraderie amongst the first-year cohorts at St. Mary's.

The Joseph L. Alioto Recreation Center on St. Mary's campus also offers fun outdoor games for students. To enjoy the moderate climate of the area, students can check out items for games such as cornhole, spike ball, rugby, soccer, and bocce ball. Giant versions of popular table games such as Connect Four and Jenga are also available. Rubber bowling sets and grass volleyball nets, as well as outdoor mats, are additional items students can use to interact outside as much as possible. These activities support St. Mary's vision of promoting physical and mental health, increasing student engagement, and encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle to complement the academic experience.

## Natural Surroundings

Across the country from St Mary's, Campus Recreation at Liberty University near the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia also takes advantage of natural surroundings to encourage outdoor activities. The Hydaway Outdoor Center provides activities such as beach volleyball, a waterslide, a zipline, kayaking, fishing, hiking, backpacking, and camping in and around Camp Hydaway Lake. Students can rent the essential equipment for these activities, including a two-burner stove, lanterns, and hammocks. Guided excursions include camping, fly fishing, whitewater rafting, and rappelling. Students can also earn Wilderness First Aid certification.

Yoga classes are common in the offerings of Campus Recreation centers. Liberty University offers not only yoga, but also paddleboard yoga. Students can increase their ability to balance and flow through poses while perched on a paddleboard in Camp Hydaway Lake. Other fun lake activities sponsored by Campus Recreation are late-night parties and stargazing.

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glowsticks, a bonfire, snacks, and more, enticing students to experience the beautiful weather of the Appalachian Mountains under the stars. According to the student newspaper, the *Liberty Champion*, plans are in the works to expand the lake from six to thirty-one acres by the fall of 2022 so that more activities can accommodate more students.

Campus Recreation departments are undoubtedly vital to private universities and colleges. They provide more than the typical weight rooms, basketball courts, walking tracks, and swimming pools found on nearly every campus. Campus Recreation facilities and programming change as culture changes, adapting to the needs of the student body. By offering state-of-the-art, environmentally-focused facilities, engaging and fun community-building activities, and using natural outdoor resources to bring unique experiences to students, Campus Recreation contributes to the physical, mental, and emotional health of the student body.



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** PUPN staff writer Lisa Gibbs earned her Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration in 2018. She is an advocate for arts, particularly dance, in education and for increasing the financial well-being of artists through financial education.

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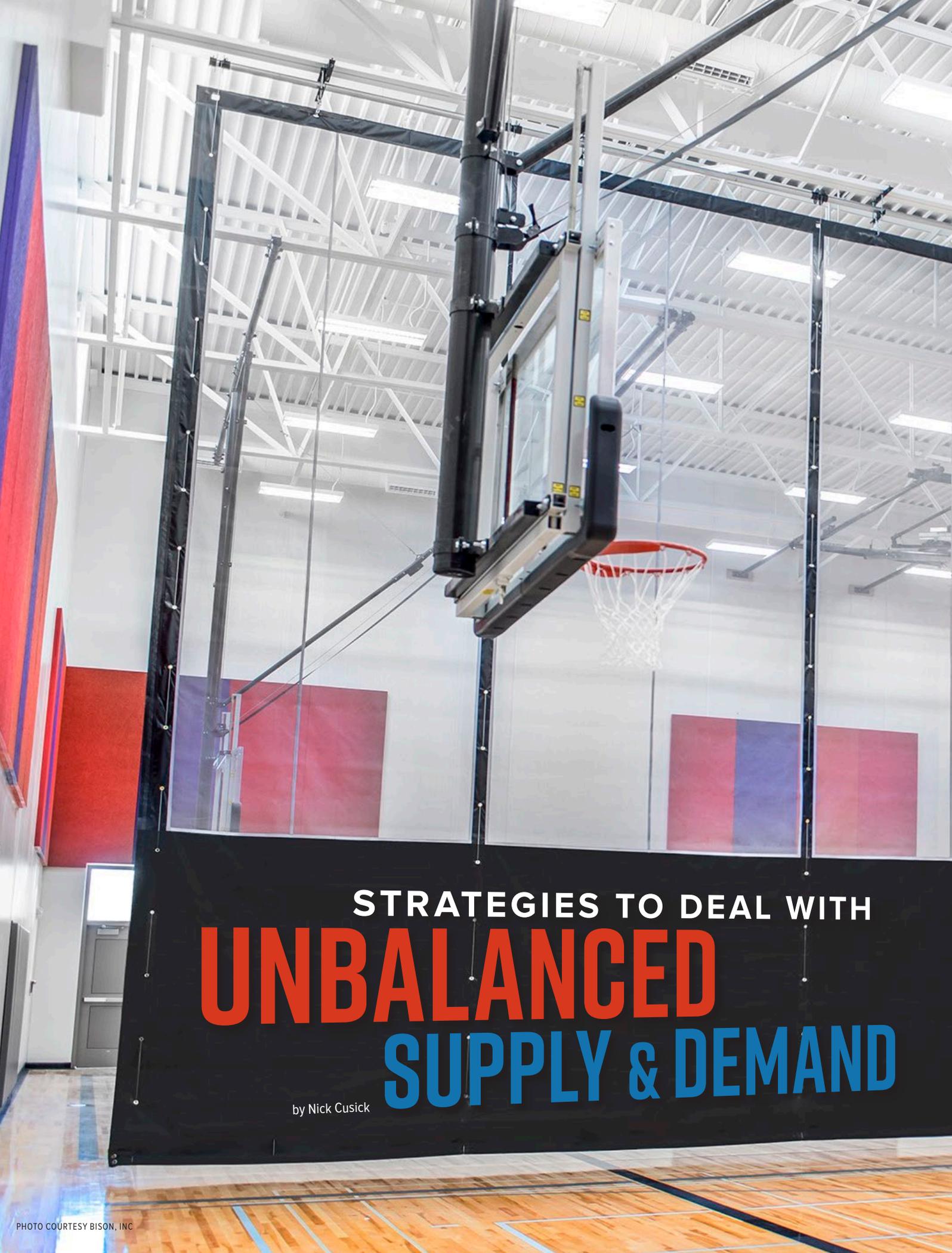
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STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH  
**UNBALANCED**  
**SUPPLY & DEMAND**

by Nick Cusick



After extended shutdowns and locked gyms—even locked outdoor playgrounds and courts—the recent major uptick in activity in the sports industry is a welcome and long overdue development. Unfortunately, even for optimistic companies that were able to continue production in 2020 for future sales, 2021 has created extreme production limitations for American manufacturers.



PHOTO COURTESY BISON, INC

For nearly a year, supply chain disruptions have caused delays, and sometimes it has become impossible to secure critical materials and components needed to build sports equipment. Price increases and quantity limitations for steel, aluminum, glass, foam, fasteners, finishes, and packaging materials have been common occurrences for months, with no relief in sight.

Adding to the upward pressure on prices, labor is also in very short supply in most of the United States, and hiring additional employees to meet demand can be a challenge. Current employees are often working overtime and taking on new responsibilities in different departments. Additionally, domestic and ocean-based freight costs have skyrocketed, in some cases to 100% higher than 2018-19 rates.

Most businesses are doing everything possible to maintain their quality, service, and delivery standards during this challenging time. Private college and university campuses will be successful in navigating the next year or more by taking advantage of some of the following strategies forged in the fire of a worldwide unbalancing of supply and demand at a level and duration unseen in our lifetimes.

### Shop Around and Order Early

Prices for most products and services have been escalating rapidly. The experts are not expecting them to drop for many months, if not longer. With manufacturers and distributors taking mid-year price increases and adding input surcharges due to their suppliers' price increases, finding the best price will require some shopping around. Even finding the needed equipment in stock will be challenging at any cost.

### Create Flexibility in Recreation Areas

Single-sport and sports-only facilities are so "last season," as they say in the fashion industry. With staff shortages limiting hours and maintenance support, facilities need to serve as many users as possible. With electronically-controlled divider curtains, one gym can provide basketball, volleyball, baseball/softball, and even futsal and team handball at the same time, reducing scheduling conflicts and the number of hours needed to staff the space. Add rolling portable equipment or key- or touchscreen-controlled

ceiling- and wall-mounted basketball and volleyball systems for additional flexibility. Small portable bleachers can easily and safely be repositioned between sports and be removed or stored for a non-sports fundraising, academic, or other community events.

### Choose Height Adjustable and Multi-Sport Systems

Height adjusters that move the basketball rim height from the official ten feet to as low as seven and a half feet have long been common on basketball systems in middle and elementary school gyms, as well as multiple-purpose and club facilities that provide opportunities to players of all ages and abilities. Similarly, some volleyball systems can be adjusted to men's, women's and junior plus badminton, pickleball, and tennis heights.

### Invest in NFHS and NCAA Approved Equipment

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intramural leagues, the equipment needs to be suitable for the highest level of play. It is no surprise that more sports-related injuries occur at pickup games on the local community courts or after the coach goes home on the municipal soccer field than on a competition-level courts or fields.

### Replace Older Systems with Newer, More Convenient Models

People would generally not choose to back to the early cell phones—heavy bags with antennas and limited service. Likewise, athletes are wise to demand the latest technology, too. For example, volleyball systems used to be heavy steel structures, then evolved to lightweight but flexible aluminum posts; now there are lightweight carbon fiber volleyball poles that are as rigid as steel, as well as freestanding portables and push-button, ceiling-suspended systems.

### Invest in Sports Equipment with Long-lasting Warranties

Even in a world where refrigerators are considered disposable after five years, customers can still find high-quality sports equipment from customer-friendly companies that back

their products with long-term or lifetime warranties. Making equipment to last a lifetime might seem like an old-fashioned concept but, for the modern world, this is the best way to reduce energy needed to produce both raw materials and finished goods, thereby and reducing the impact on our landfills.

From a facilities perspective, additional reasons for shopping around for longer warranties can include using the maintenance budget for other projects, reducing staff hours spent installing replacement equipment, and improving customer satisfaction by having limited downtime for broken or dangerous equipment.

### Order Early

Campus personnel have been busy putting out fires and managing constantly changing guidelines for over eighteen months now, but worn out equipment must still be replaced. Equipment that would normally be in stock for next-day shipment may not be available this year. Even if the needed equipment is in stock, shipping delays and increased costs may mean that events or games must be cancelled. The best insurance is to place orders ten to twelve

weeks before the items are needed; longer lead times may be needed for custom items such as special sizes or colors, or items that require artwork approval, such as graphic wall padding or lettered volleyball post padding.

### Source Domestic Manufacturers' Products

While supply chain issues are widespread regardless of where products are manufactured, offshore sourced components and equipment are impacted more than American-made options due to major ocean, rail, and trucking industry bottlenecks. The higher the offshore content of suppliers' products, the more unpredictable the lead time. Some non-U.S. sourced materials and products that used to have 60-day lead times are now running 180 days when considering long in transit times.

In addition, the unpredictable nature of current demand makes forecasting especially challenging for sports equipment suppliers who rely on non-U.S. sourced materials.

### Partner Locally

Local and regional sports equipment dealers and installers are often in the best position

to help campuses determine needs, guide decision-making, and to ultimately provide high-quality equipment and service. Use of local resources is also good for the community, keeping funds in the area and building support for the campus and facilities.

### Take Care of Staff

Every college staff employee has been impacted by operating a facility under conditions that were unimaginable just a few months ago. The pressures of managing their personal lives, maintaining their work responsibilities, and wanting to help people struggling with their individual challenges can be too much to take on alone. For some organizations, one-on-one meetings or notes to say thanks and check in are enough. Some may find it more effective to organize a group meal, event, or special recognition program. For campuses that have identified staff satisfaction as a concern, now is the time to look at organizational improvements that can help retain current staff, along with their knowledge and passion for the facility and its success.

### Call to Action

If there is one lasting contribution that a worldwide health crisis can make, it might be widespread acceptance of the need for flexibility under rapidly changing conditions. A year ago, many wished for a return to normal or “new normal,” but the sports world has always had a way of pushing forward toward new world records, higher participation rates, and—as the Olympic Games always remind us—finding common ground through competition.



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Nick Cusick is the founder and Chief Executive Officer at Bison, Inc., a U.S. manufacturer of sporting goods equipment. Athletic directors, coaches, facility administrators, and equipment managers rely on Bison to provide safe, durable, innovative and on-time products. In 2013, IPI by Bison began manufacturing custom-built sports equipment required for the new gymnasium construction and renovation market.

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# SOUND ADVICE

by Brennan Prins

People who are planning or renovating a college's fitness center should be certain to choose the right flooring to avoid issues down the road. College and university fitness centers commonly include areas for weight-lifting, rows of exercise machines, big mirrors, windows pouring in natural light, and separate spaces for group exercise classes. The floors often resemble standard, run-of-the-mill fitness center floors, and this resemblance can be where the design and construction choices become problematic.



Everything may look impressive, but looks can be deceiving, and appearance alone is not how campus fitness centers are judged when they are filled with students and staff there for unique fitness regimens. Understanding how sound travels in a facility can lead to the entire facility's success or failure.

### **Fitness Is Changing**

A university's fitness center isn't like the old-fashioned health clubs that have been around for decades. Everything about fitness in the college setting is different, and university recreation centers can feature sprawling sizes, complex regulations, and a mind-boggling array of equipment.

One method of exercise is increasing in popularity: group fitness classes, with proprietary workout regimens from the likes of Zumba®, BODYPUMP™, and CrossFit. These and many other programs challenge students with high-intensity training that pushes them

beyond anything fitness experts of just a few years ago could have imagined. However, with more pushing comes more force, and with force comes both vibration and noise.

Once vibrations and noise are combined within mixed-use buildings, increasingly the norm in these impressive centers—especially those on elite, private college and university campuses—the reduction of structure-borne noise in fitness centers becomes essential.

### **The Invisible Killer—Noise Pollution**

Any sound that's too loud or lasts too long—like that of a student dropping a barbell or a room full of CrossFit participants running in sync—can result in unnecessary stress, anxiety, and annoyance for others nearby. And this pervasive noise won't just stay in the room. In most cases, the acoustics of a fitness center will allow the audible structure-borne sound to travel through standard floor mats, floors, and ceilings, disrupting those in adjoining rooms,

buildings, or living spaces. In fact, neglecting the noise factor has compromised or ruined countless fitness centers.

### **Choose Noise Abatement Wisely**

In essence, fitness centers need to find ways to stop or reduce sound in every possible way. For airborne noise, wall air leaks should be sealed, air ducts insulated, and acoustical sealant applied along joints. Flooring also needs attention; impact and footfall noise/vibration will travel through the floor and into connected structures.

Understanding the effects of structure-borne sounds and vibrations from athletes and equipment is a science. Circuit training, treadmills, spin classes, dance, CrossFit and aerobics—and the noise pollution generated from each—need attention; all of these activities require appropriate flooring to mitigate sound. The result contributes to a pleasing experience for everyone who uses the fitness center, thereby encouraging repeated visits.

### Weighing The Options

Administrators of campus fitness centers can choose one of two options: Pretend that sound won't be an issue in the fitness center and hope for the best, or choose resilient rubber surface tiles that are designed to dissipate structure-borne noise to guarantee better sound-level experiences for students and staff. The second of these two options is almost always the right choice. The result will be a surface that greatly reduces the bounce of weights, the humming vibrations of fitness equipment, and the repetitive thumps from group exercise.

Certainly, administrators should research flooring manufacturers and installers. Many university administrators believe that fitness center flooring is all the same, but the reality is there's a significant difference among products and companies. We've seen fitness centers struggling to remain in their space because of their inability to control the noise within their center due to sub-standard surfacing solutions.

### Holistic Approach

Several variables must be considered, such as the shape of the fitness center, the walls and bracketing systems, doors, windows, ceiling, and—of course—the flooring assemblies. Planners must consider external areas and their needs, as well. In short, planners need to have a holistic approach to noise mitigation and consider the construction materials of adjoining spaces. Much of this information is new to administrators, which is why flooring professionals are often eager to share everything they know about the particulars.

One of my favorite parts of going through the process of choosing the right flooring is the initial meeting I have with a prospective customer. I'll show them the differences between our options and how one rubber floor product can be superior to another. We'll also look at a product's test results, usually another eye-opener, since some rubber tile products have been engineered to reduce structure-borne

noise by as much as 38 decibels. Obviously, in these facilities, aesthetics matter tremendously. Luckily, style doesn't need to be sacrificed for practicality. There's flooring that is aesthetically pleasing yet can take a beating and absorb the sound of everything students want to do, without noise creating an unpleasant environment for students seeking to become or remain fit and healthy. Here's the sound advice I give my clients: Make sure that your fitness center plan accounts for noise considerations, then let the experts handle the rest.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Brennan Prins (b.prins@sofsurfaces.com) is a member of family-owned sofsURFACES, a worldwide leader in the production and installation of rubber surface tiles (www.sofsurfaces.com). Prins has grown with the business since he was a teenager and now manages the in-house sales and support team for customers across North America and Europe.

## Building or renovating a gymnasium?

by Bison

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# CONSIDERATIONS WHEN BUYING **FITNESS EQUIPMENT**

by Kevin Feldman

With budgets finalized and students back on campus, many institutions are likely preparing to invest in new fitness equipment. In other words, the buying season has begun. On average, properly maintained cardio equipment should be replaced every three to five years, while strength equipment can last ten years or more. For those in the market for new fitness equipment, here are a few suggestions to consider and questions to ask before making purchasing decisions.

### Determine Needs

Before beginning to investigate suppliers, purchasers must have a clear understanding of the fitness center's specific needs, considering questions such as these:

- How often is the current equipment being used, and which products need to be replaced?
- What are the most popular items, and why are they popular?
- Who is using the equipment, and for what purpose?
- What do the users like and dislike, and why so they have these opinions?

Purchasers may also consider surveying the users of the equipment; users can provide terrific insights and can confirm or dispel any preconceptions. Another great place to look is in the industry trade publications, such as *PUPN*. Purchasers should review the ads and articles and check out the vendors' websites. Decision-makers may also consider attending trade shows

to see and test equipment and develop relationships with peers and vendors alike. All of these resources will provide a wealth of information on the newest products, technology, and trends to help make informed decisions.

### Invite Bids

After determining needs, the next step is inviting bids. For a good list of contacts, terrific places to start are the *PUPN* Marketplace or NIRSA Buyers' Guide. Anyone—not just subscribers or members—may access either of these resources. Additionally, talking with peers at other institutions is highly recommended, as they can share their experiences with specific vendors, product quality, delivery, maintenance, and post-sales support. Depending on the amount of equipment and specific needs, inviting at least three to four vendors to submit a bid should be adequate. Purchasers should contact both local and national suppliers and spend some time talking and/or meeting with each. Decision-makers should ask for recommendations and consider equipment and product features that are different from the norm. Also, many suppliers will offer demo units

to evaluate, especially for those considering a purchase of significant equipment quantities.

### Weigh the Total Cost of Ownership

The purchase price is only part of the total cost of owning a product. Even the most durable equipment will require service and ongoing maintenance, so it's important for purchasers to understand these expectations and costs. Although purchasing equipment with all the bells and whistles can be attractive, some users may be intimidated and need assistance with operations. Further, repairs for high-end equipment can be costly and require certified technicians to maintain. Purchasers should be sure to inquire about the ease-of-use, training requirements, ongoing software upgrades, and any additional facility needs, such as electrical, WiFi, cable, and space.

Warranty protection, maintenance, post-sales support, parts availability, and other facility requirements can vary greatly by manufacturer, significantly impacting the overall costs. Decision-makers should be sure to read and understand the product warranty completely, including the fine print. Questions to consider include these:

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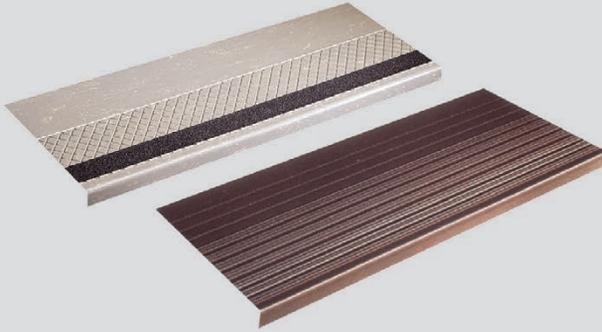
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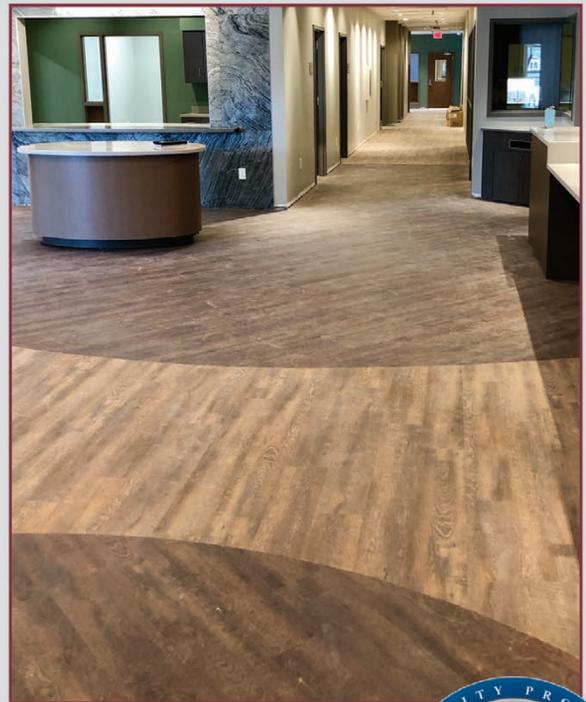
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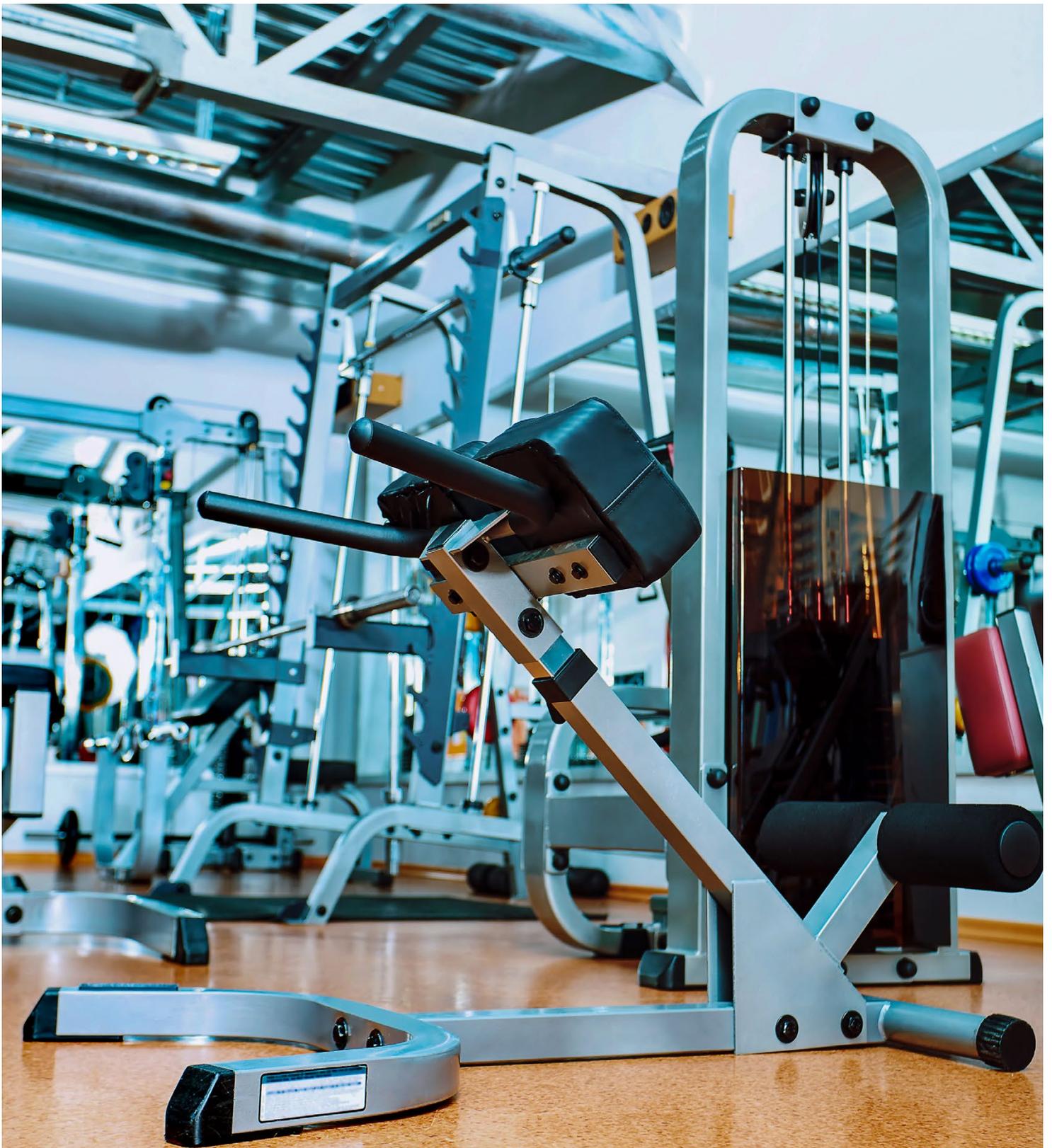


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Choose manufacturers who can provide all necessary gymnasium products. Allowing local representatives or general contractors to piecemeal this equipment from multiple sources normally leads to added cost, coordination problems, and confusion when future service or warranty issues may arise. Choose manufacturers who offer extended warranties. Don't accept just a one year warranty.

- Are freight costs covered for replacement parts?
- Is a lifetime warranty defined as the average life of the product, or forever?
- How responsive is the service department?

Purchasers should also call or email each vendor's customer service department to evaluate how quickly the call or email is answered. Purchasing decision-makers should talk with other customers about their experience with both the overall product quality and vendor's after-the-sale support. Questions to ask other customers include these:

- Did the product meet expectations?
- Did the vendor honor their commitments?
- Would the other customer purchase the same equipment and work with the vendor again? Why or why not?

All of these items should be considered part of the total costs and weighed accordingly.

### Choose to Lease or Purchase

Once needs are determined and vendors have been chosen, the next step is deciding how to pay for it.

Should the equipment be bought outright or leased? Leasing has become much more common and provides an opportunity to change equipment every few years. On the other hand, buying the equipment saves money by eliminating interest and providing the ability to sell or donate it at a later date. Most equipment vendors can refer customers to reputable third-party finance companies or offer in-house financing options.

Purchasing new equipment for a fitness center can be an exciting and rewarding experience. A well designed and equipped fitness center will attract more users and help market the institution to prospective students, professors, and administrators. Purchasing decision-makers should do their homework, ask a lot of questions, lean on the vendors for answers, and include numerous people in the process.



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Kevin Feldman is Vice President of Sales & Marketing at Green Series Fitness, a Brigadoon Fitness Company. He can be reached at [KevinF@Brigadoon-Fitness.com](mailto:KevinF@Brigadoon-Fitness.com). For more information, visit [GreenSeries-Fitness.com](http://GreenSeries-Fitness.com).

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