





# 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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