

THE STATE OF INTRAMURAL SPORTS – 2023 SURVEY COMMENTS: GENERAL

Comments and Suggestions from Intramural Sports Professionals

A total of 156 IM programs provided responses to an Intramural Sports program policy and procedure survey conducted in June and July 2023. A complete breakdown of results by question and a listing of survey respondents by school/program size are available online at campusrec.fsu.edu/nirsa. Below are selected responses to the survey's open-ended questions.

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES: **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

Nearly all survey respondents provided feedback on current challenges and opportunities in the field of Intramural Sports. The comments mainly focused on the following topic areas. Individual comments follow noted by size of program and if the program operates as a free-to-play or pay-to-play model.

Staffing: Staff Recruitment, Pay Rates, Commitment to the Job / Improvement

Participants: Cost, Commitment to Play, Forfeits, Women's Participation, Recreational Participation, Sporting Behavior

Campus Challenges: Facility Space, Budget Shortfalls, Declining Enrollment

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES: **FACILITY SPACE & COLLABORATIONS**

Numerous respondents noted facility space, declining enrollment, and budget shortfalls as challenges for their programs. Many of the solutions to these challenges rely on campus-specific efforts, therefore broad suggestions were limited.

I've been really pushing for collaborations that do not use our traditional space (trivia/board game night with the library, bowling and golf at campus facilities, swimming with aquatics, fitness competitions, ice hockey, etc.). This has helped us still offer a variety of activities, but they're not using court or field space. Additionally, most of the staff needed is provided by the group we're collaborating with so I only need to provide one supervisor for checking participants in and reporting scores. (Large, Pay)

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES: **STAFF RECRUITMENT – PROFESSIONAL & STUDENT**

Our greatest challenges are recruiting and retaining student officials. We are way behind other areas of the University and the community in pay rates for part-time work. And here we thought officials recruitment and retention was difficult before the pandemic! Additionally, there is a noticeable trend of those leaving the field, not wanting to commit to night and weekend hours. Perhaps this is just my perception, but it seems to be getting more difficult to recruit quality professionals that want to put in the time to build strong officials and programs. Couple that with so many departments (ours included) going away from GAs in favor of Coordinators, it has gotten much more difficult to hire quality full-time staff. (Large, Pay)

Our main challenges have been related to staffing. Students do not have the same drive for professional development and push back on advice from administrative staff. We are working to find new ways to keep staff bought in and willing to see what working hard can do for them. (Small, Free)

Recruiting and retaining student staff. Pay rates, weekly hours worked, and overall effort while on shift can be challenging. Our participation demand exceeds our ability to recruit and retain student staff. (Large, Free)

Currently we have plenty of interest, just not enough staff to accommodate all students seeking to play. We're exploring more self-officiated options (short leagues/tournaments) as a result while not increasing staffing much to supervise. We're also incentivizing with cheaper play pass options for staff to entice employment a bit more. (Large, Pay)

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES: **STUDENT STAFF PAY RATES & COMMITMENT TO WORK/IMPROVE**

Staff retention [is a challenge] as it is hard to keep up with the competitive pay rates of off-campus employers. (Large, Free)

Staff recruitment and retention will be the biggest challenge. Low wages coupled with poor sportsmanship have created issues with staff retention. (Mid-Size, Pay)

Student sport official dedication to improvement. (Small, Free)

Student officials don't want to work more than 8 hours a week. (Mid-Size, Pay)

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES: **PARTICIPATION TRENDS**

Students not knowing what Intramurals are or the value of it. A lot of programs had to shut down / pause / change what their programs looked like during the pandemic. Now coming out it, so many current students don't know what it was pre-pandemic and there isn't as much word of mouth like their used to be. (Large, Pay)

(Loneliness) Not only do they not have other students to create teams with, but the fear of meeting new people / being outside their comfort zone will prevent them from participating in event(s) whose goal is to bring students together. (Mid-size, Free)

Students are heavily involved in many things and don't think they have time from intramurals. Many students weren't varsity athletes in high school so don't even bother playing sports as they aren't good at them. Making friends and finding enough players for a team is challenging. (Small, Free)

... I feel like there has been a surge in youth sport "select" teams that has fizzled some of the rec play in communities. (Mid-size, Pay)

This generation is focused on academic performance and trying to get in and out of college as quickly as possible... (Small, Free)

Student engagement is changing. Students are not taking on as much leadership responsibility and want more flexible schedule options. Preference to smaller teams with larger rosters. Our students seem to desire leagues over tournaments despite wanting more flexible options. (Mid-Size, Free)

It's harder to get the non-traditional athlete to participate in intramural activities. (Small, Free)

The vast majority of our participation has been highly competitive since the pandemic. The scale of recreational play has diminished significantly. (Mid-Size, Free)

Students seem less competitive and mostly interested in recreational play. (Small, Free)

[The need for] Increasing recreational involvement. Some of our leagues are too competitive. (Small, Pay)

Underrepresented group participation [is a challenge]. (Large, Free)

Female involvement in the women's leagues. Our co-ed participation is low, but it still exists. (Large, Free)
Recruitment, specifically for co rec and women's offerings. Our men's numbers are close to where they were pre-covid but our other offerings have not recovered. (Mid-Size, Free)

Declining female participation. (Small, Free)

Large downturn in female participation. (Small, Free)

Students are no longer wanting a long-term commitment (season sports). That being said, we have started to offer more day tournaments and drop-in programs where no registration is needed prior to participating. (Mid-Size, Pay)

Students are more involved with other things across campus and are not as dedicated to Intramural Sports. There are some students who participate in almost everything, but that is not the norm. (Mid-Size, Pay)

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES: **PARTICIPANT COMMITMENT**

Forfeits have gotten out of hand recently. When it comes to the more recreational sports, teams do not show up and do not give notice more often. (Small, Free)

High levels of forfeits/defaults taking away from games for teams. (Mid-Size, Free)

Over-committed students, leading to forfeits. (Large, Free)

Students feeling overcommitted leading to a decline in league sports. (Large, Pay)

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES: **SPORTING BEHAVIOR**

General sportsmanship, respect demonstrated towards officiating staff. (Multiple Programs)

We have seen an increase in reports of derogatory language (specifically homophobic slurs) being used on the field. We are not sure if this is an actual increase in usage or if teams are more comfortable reporting it and calling out that behavior... (Large, Pay)

Lots of issues with sportsmanship. We are planning to focus on training our staff to better diffuse and deescalate situations that may arise during games because disciplinary meetings with student participants were an increased occurrence this past year. It's hard to get to the root of the problem because it could be staff being too reactive to participants' behavior or it could be a lack of emotional self-control on the participant side while they are playing. What we have control over is how our staff are trained to handle these situations so at the moment, this is what we have decided to focus on. (Mid-Size, Free)

PERSPECTIVES: **LOOKING AHEAD**

We need to focus on how to impact the students that are coming onto campus and how they want intramurals to be played on campus. More recreational sport types rather than competitive or traditional sports. (Large, Free) – *Northeastern*

We are going to have to adapt and add more unique activities to get students to keep coming out to play. They have so many other options for things to do outside of their classes that we are going to have to figure out how to keep up with them. (Mid-Size, Pay) – *Towson (Maryland)*

The days of 300 team leagues on our individual campuses are no more. Students are overwhelmed with way more opportunities campus-wide than some of us had when we were students, and as administrators we need to be aware of and accept this and program to the needs of our current students (Large, Free) – *Florida*

The need to continue to break barriers to entry for diverse communities is still of high importance. Campus partnerships will always provide value and strong program assessments can go a long way too. (Small, Free) – *Pepperdine*

People still want to play competitive sports - it is an excellent outlet and offers social connections ... Also addressing gender equity and how to be inclusive without excluding people because the inclusivity is putting them at unfair disadvantages. (Large, Pay) – *Anonymous*

It is okay to move from the traditional. Different student populations across campuses want different things. (Small, Free) – *Elon (North Carolina)*

Changing student populations mean trying to maximize space on campus to provide the jobs/student development on campus ... being willing to offer new sports/other sports at different times, if more traditional sport leagues are lacking participation. I think that IM Sports could evolve into more learn-to-play sports, which could help with recruitment for club sports teams and provide single events/tester sports for new league or tournament offerings. (Large, Pay) – *Grand Valley State (Michigan)*

We have piloted and worked into our annual schedule a large number of non-officiated sport leagues (that are traditionally officiated). Ex: flag football, soccer, and basketball. We are doing this both to offset the challenge of recruiting student staff but also to continue to emphasize a more recreational set of offerings, to promote civility, and to eliminate (to some extent) the instances of poor sportsmanship and verbal abuse of officials' staff. (Large, Free) – *Clemson*

More is not always better. We need to prioritize the programs and services that are in demand and successful. Our professional staff and student staff resources are limited in size and attention span more than ever. We often get ourselves into over-programming binds where we are spending 80% of our time in areas that provide 20% of the impact and our intramural sports professionals are often the first ones to say "yes" to new workloads. "No" is a valuable word to have in the vocabulary. (Large, Free) – *NC State*

I'm generally concerned that Intramural Sports will struggle to retain sport officials if there aren't measures put in place to make the playing environment more friendly and hospitable to both staff and participants. I think it will also be important to focus on enhancing the participant experience through good customer service and removing any unnecessary barriers that may be in place so that participation doesn't start to decline either. (Mid-Size, Free) – *James Madison (Virginia)*

Sports on campus is more vital than ever I feel. Students need an outlet and a place to socialize but our programming efforts showcase a decreasing interest as more and more obligations are pushed onto our students' plates. We as a field need to be strategic in the next cycle or 2 of students to ensure that IM Sports can continue to be a service to our students. (Mid-Size, Free) – *Florida International*

THE STATE OF INTRAMURAL SPORTS – 2023 SURVEY COMMENTS: OFFICIALS TRAINING

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OFFICIALS TRAINING: **TRAINING LENGTH & COMPONENTS**

Non-scrimmage training dates, presentations are 10-30 minutes with breaks scheduled and total training time doesn't exceed 2 hours & 30 minutes. (Large, Free)

We have recently added a hybrid station to the usual station work during training. One station will be a refresher classroom setting of basics and good things to remember during the second/third nights of training. It has been overall well received by our staff. (Large, Pay)

We have an outline that our officials can fill out and follow along while also utilizing web quizzes. (Small, Pay)

We are also looking to break the in-person training into smaller (15 min or less) segments with the goal of keeping participants' attention over a longer stretch of time. (Mid-Size, Free)

We incorporate classroom and field/court clinics each day rather than rules one day and mechanics the next. We also limit our sessions to no more than 2 hours per evening. This works really well for the students we work with. (Mid-Size, Free)

OFFICIALS TRAINING: **HYBRID TRAINING**

We offer a hybrid of in-person and online training. In-person training is used for more specific rules, teaching mechanics, video review, and scrimmages. Online training is used for basic rules and video review. (Small, Free)

We are looking to transition more into a hybrid training model to place more emphasis on the in-class modules to move online and allow more time for on-field/court training during our time together. (Mid-Size, Free)

We hold in-person sessions for major sports which are classroom and then a field or court session. This is supplemented by online weekly modules we have been using for a while. We also hold weekly pre-game sessions to address certain "hot" topics like hand checks in basketball or slides in soccer. (Mid-Size, Free)

Students prefer the experiential learning of station work and scrimmages over classroom sessions. Classroom content was mostly moved to an online format, but it was found this year that retention of that information was poor so we may be returning to mostly in-person training sessions with some online components. (Mid-Size, Free)

We tried using a hybrid model with online trainings to reduce the classroom portion of training. However, we found this to be unsuccessful and will be returning to in-person fully for trainings. (Large, Free)

Moved to strictly in-person trainings and went away from online / classroom trainings. (Mid-Size, Free)

OFFICIALS TRAINING: **ONLINE RESOURCES & TECHNOLOGIES**

We record each of our trainings and post it for students to review and it helps when students have to miss due to class. (Small, Free)

We make resources available after training on Slack channels and Canvas classroom. (Mid-Size, Pay)

We have utilized Canvas to create all of our hybrid course materials. (Mid-Size, Free)

We have a Canvas course for all of our intramural sports. Each officiated sport we train officials on is its own page within the Canvas Course where we upload trainings, quizzes, case plays, and any other materials that are necessary. Our students like this process because they utilize Canvas often for their academic classes, so it's very natural for them to check our Canvas course for IMs. (Mid-Size, Pay)

OFFICIALS TRAINING: **PRESEASON SCRIMMAGES / PRACTICE GAMES**

We have moved to a one-day model for in-class learning and on-court learning. Then, practice games are used during "week zero" providing players with more opportunities to participate. (Large, Pay)

We have begun teaming up with club sports to play a scrimmage to allow our staff to train for in-game situations. (Mid-Size, Pay)

We have increased the number of pre-season games our officials are required to work ahead of regular season play beginning. (Large, Pay)

OFFICIALS TRAINING: **STUDENT FACILITATION**

We utilize senior student officials (supervisors) who are experienced, proficient and motivated to teach their peers. In some cases, they lead the entire training session. (Mid-Size, Free)

We also have found success with having student supervisors and returning officials help lead or facilitate training so the new officials are hearing the information from their peers and feel more comfortable asking questions. (Large, Pay)

OFFICIALS TRAINING: **SPORTING BEHAVIOR / GAME CONTROL**

We have run into a decrease in officials due to an increase in difficult participants, so to help combat this, we are working on being more strict in our sportsmanship ratings and being more strict in ejecting players for ill behavior directed at officials. (Small, Free)

More interactive using videos and photos in the slides. Having a focus on game management and conflict management. (Large, Free)

I have made sure to include conflict management trainings and pre-season scrimmage opportunities for officials. (Small, Free)

OFFICIALS TRAINING: **PARTNERSHIPS**

We are looking to work with the local state high school soccer association to host certification courses (open to community as well) at our field site - with a discount for our student officials. This will supplement (or fully replace) our need to train soccer officials and provide them with a certification that would allow them to also work locally. (Mid-Size, Free)