



As a long time, crucial east region NWAC member, Wenatchee Valley College's (WVC) interest and commitment in stabilizing and improving their athletic programs is a step in the right direction. As a result of WVC's desire to improve, Vice President of Student Affairs, Dr. Diana Garza, requested an athletic program review and assessment from the NWAC. The NWAC review team consisted of Jim Martineau, Clackamas Community College, Athletic Director and former NWAC executive board chair, and Marco Azurdia, NWAC Executive Director. The review and assessment consisted of 1.5 days of comprehensive interviews with multiple constituents of the WVC athletic program.

The following is a summary of themes that emerged in the interviews followed by a series of suggested actions that could improve the program.

THEMES:

- Student athletes described having an interesting experience at WVC. The students interviewed identified several areas of legitimate concern.
- Lack of understanding about the value of athletics from a fiscal point of view as well as what athletics brings to the campus community and to the city of Wenatchee. There was a general sense that college leaders do not appreciate the consistent FTE's generated by the athletic programs and are unwilling to provide appropriate resources to provide a first-class experience.
- There seems to be a lack of trust on the campus that was consistent in the interviews. This included administration, athletic director, coaches, student-athletes, and community members.
- High volume of turnover in the athletic director position has resulted in program instability. There may have been some inconsistencies of what positions would be in place when the new athletic director was hired. When hired, those positions were no longer a part of the athletic department.
- The athletic department appears to have no significant structure, vision, or plan, and their attendance for NWAC member meetings is poor. Coaching and or department meetings are few if any. There appears to be a lack of structure around the student experience and how to provide an experience that encourages students to choose WVC, stay at WVC, and support students while they are at WVC.
- There is a sense that the athletic programs have failed the community. Historically, there has been an incredible amount of support for WVC athletic programs which has waned in recent years. This is most likely due to instability, poor and multiple hires, and questionable practices by some of the coaches. There were several references made by supportive and influential community members who are willing to invest financial resources into WVC athletics. But they are not willing to provide financial assistance until the college gets its' house in order with the athletic department.

- There is a concern that the problem in athletics is quite complicated and some question the support from the administration. There is a real disconnect and lack of trust between administration to coaches, coaches to administration. The perception from those interviewed is that the administration does not care what happens to the athletic department.
- There appears to be a disconnect between the coaches, faculty, and on campus services. .
- There are significant opportunities to the challenges but the financial commitment to seize opportunities may not be feasible with the current financial climate of the college and lack of appreciation for the value of athletics to the college.
- It appears that some of the coaches have not adequately advised student-athletes on their academic plan. Possibly some coaches are solely concerned that students are eligible to compete and not making progress toward degree. It is possible that coaches may not have received the training required to adequately do their job and there is no athletic administrative support, which compounds the difficulty for coaches to be effective in their coaching roles.
- There is a general sense from non-student interviews that the relationships with the athletics program is less than ideal, and the relationship between coaches and the athletic director may be strained.
- Athletic programs appear underfunded across the board. Approximately \$140,000 is allotted in the general operation fund and there seems to be an expectation that student fees should cover athletic expenses and that the athletic director and teams should fundraise for normal athletic functions. The athletic director was told that there is an expectation for him to raise \$500,000. This is highly unrealistic, especially when he has no support staff and must be the game supervisor and do all administrative support duties. Even if there was this type of support, this ask/expectation is unrealistic.

Based on our discussions with a variety of stakeholders, it appears that those involved directly with athletics have felt a lack of effort to support WVC athletics. Some of the feelings stem from the constant turnover, coaches working without contracts for next year, and the office usage and assignments in the gym. Additionally, the perception of dissension is because of WVC decisions (administration, coaches, athletic director), lack of direction and accountability. What was once a strong part of the college now is floundering because of inadequate funding, a culture of indifference, apathy, or lack of trust by all involved.

Despite the state of the athletic department, it is encouraging to see the desire to improve in that Dr. Garza has asked for the review, and to be open to honest and caring feedback with the intent of bringing the program back to a place of strength. The following suggested actions are an attempt to provide helpful recommendations-based on years of collegiate athletic administration and best practices in the NWAC. We fully understand the recommendations below may create some difficult, yet important, conversations on campus and in the community. We are confident that making some hard decisions will be the best way to stabilize the athletic program and position it to be strong going forward.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS:

- With Dr. Harrison's background as an athletic director in the NWAC, the support for Wenatchee Valley College athletics must start here.
- There is lack of trust from top to bottom that must be resolved.

- Stabilize the relationship between the school administration and the athletic director. Both need to decide if the current athletic director and the institution can coexist. With this tenuous situation, it is clear that this affects the student athletes who signed and committed to WVC for a great experience. It also affects the coaches. The athletic director has to be the right-hand person to the VP of Student Affairs so that she gains understanding and appreciation for athletics.
- Once the decision is made with administration and the athletic director, structure, accountability, and support needs to be provided for the coaches. Coaches must be held accountable and if they have coaching duties paired with other campus jobs, they must have integrity and honor the responsibilities of their job duties.
- Providing structure and commitment to the athletic department will show community members that there is positive change. Community members will then begin to support. This is not only a win for the athletic department, but also a win for the college as it opens up other doors of support. This engages the WVC campus and the community..
- Identify a way to provide administrative support to the Athletic Director and coaches. Ideally, hiring an administrative assistant and/or game manager specifically for athletics. If funding is a concern, consider combining the administrative assistant position with another part-time campus or coaching position. This practice has been done successfully at other institutions. The problem with WVC is there recent history has shown they have hired the wrong people and did not hold people accountable. Suggested training would be wise.
- There is great danger and liability of not having an athletic trainer for practices and events. This is short sided and is one incident from a potentially tragic ending. A short-term solution may be to contract out this service.
- WVC should consider working with key non-WVC and WVC stakeholders to develop a strategic plan to include short-term and long-term objectives, which are embedded into three core values. At a minimum, the plans should include:
 - Short-term:
 - Repair relationships internally on campus.
 - Fiscal analysis of realistic funding to adequately support programs. The fiscal funding should be in line with the amount of money student athletes FTE generate. This funding should be to both support the athletic programs as well as support personnel such as an athletic trainer and a game manager.
 - Coaches need to repair relationships with non-athletic personnel.
 - Identify goals that cost money and goals that do not cost money.
 - The college needs to be intentional about who they put around their student athletes.
 - Long-term:
 - Develop ongoing ways to positively engage the community regardless of who participates in athletics. Develop systems that foster and maintain relationships with WVC, not specific individuals.
 - Develop an Athletic Facilities schedule for all users.
 - Develop a realistic friend raising/fundraising plan. Provide support so that it can be done in partnership with, and support from, the Foundation.

- Work with the NWAC office staff, or other college, to develop a professional development program for athletic staff and coaches. As a member of the NWAC there are expectations that all athletic departments are to meet.
 - Develop a long-term Title IX plan to ensure ongoing compliance.
- WVC needs to commit to finding innovative ways to attract and maintain high quality coaches. With additional financial commitment from the college for coaches, coaches should have increased accountability for recruiting, athlete retention, maintaining full rosters, and college-wide/community work. Two best practices used in the NWAC to consider are:
 - Hiring coaches in a full-time capacity by creating positions that are exempt student support/coaching positions. As stated earlier, hiring the right person who is accountable and who is first student oriented, followed by athletics.
 - WVC needs to assess the student requirements/opportunities for students and funding for its athletic programs. Lack of college support has contributed to the current situation.
 - Continue to collaborate with NWAC designated staff for support, consultation, and approval as needed.

CONCLUSION:

It is our intent to provide WVC an objective picture of concerns that need to be addressed going forward. We greatly appreciated the honest and difficult discussions that took place. Additionally, we appreciate the desire of WVC to have this discussion with the intent of providing quality academic and athletic opportunities to their students. Future discussions within WVC need to be frank, not short-sighted and rooted in what is best for the students and the institution.

We look forward to talking through, clarifying, and answering any questions that arise from this document. Jim and I look forward to assisting and partnering with WVC to provide a high-quality athletic experience for student-athletes.

Respectfully submitted,

Marco Azurdia

Marco Azurdia, Executive Director, NWAC

Jim Martineau

Jim Martineau, Athletic Director, Clackamas Community College, Former NWAC Executive Board Chair