

MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

CO-CURRICULAR PROGRAM REVIEW

for the department of

**FITNESS AND RECREATION
2009-2010**



Department Review Committee

Jonathan Crockett
Coordinator of Fitness and Recreation

Rebecca H. Newell
Director of Leadership Development and Student Activities

Melissa Chaves Welch
Coordinator of Student Activities

Division Dean: Pamela Flaherty

MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

*Co-curricular Program Review
Fitness and Recreation*

Table of Contents

	Page
Section I:	
Introduction	1
History and Evolution	2
Previous Program Review	4
Process	4
The Cohort	5
Section II:	
Mission	6
Department Mission Statement	6
Complementing the College's Mission Statement	6
Section III:	
Program Description	8
Structure and Funding	8
Outreach and Recruiting	8
Systems and Procedures	9
Partnerships	9
Innovative Practices	9
Nationwide Best Practices and Benchmarking	10
Notable Highlights of the Benchmarking Study	10
Other Findings	10
Constituencies Impacting the Program	11
Adequacies/Inadequacies	11
Section IV:	
Program Effectiveness	15
Program Outcomes and Ongoing Assessment	15
Section V:	
Student Learning Outcomes	16
Student Learning Outcomes and Ongoing Assessment	16
Opportunities and Activities for Achievement of SLO's	16
Matrix I	17
SLO Analysis of Evidence	17
Institutional Student Learning Outcomes	19
Matrix II	19

MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

*Co-curricular Program Review
Fitness and Recreation*

Table of Contents (*continued*)

	Page
Section VI: External Review Highlights	19
Section VII: Conclusions	24
Strengths and Weaknesses	24
Section VIII: Appendix	28+
A. UMASS Lowell Recreation Center Membership Contract	
B. Previous Program Review	
C. CAS Standards	
D. MCC Student Survey and Survey Results (SurveyMonkey)	
E. Student demographics information (Banner)	
F. Sports Team Waiver	
G. Benchmarking Materials	
H. CAS Self-Assessment	
I. Government Forecast Data for Fitness Trainers and Aerobics Instructors	
J. External Program Review (narrative and supporting documents)	

MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Co-curricular Program Review Fitness and Recreation

Section I: Introduction

The Fitness and Recreation Department is an integral part of the Student Activities Department, both working together to reach parallel objectives toward the ultimate goal of student success. Both departments strive, in part, to inspire a sense of institutional investment in the college community, and support transformative education by offering a variety of co-curricular opportunities. The Middlesex Community College Fitness and Recreation Department is charged with 5 major responsibilities – listed below. Funded by student fees and charged by the institution to provide services to students this Program Review focuses on those efforts. However, it is important to note that faculty, staff, and other partners are mentioned throughout as they are an integral part of the Fitness and Recreation community.

Departmental responsibilities

1. Provide high-quality competitive and social sports programming.
2. Provide a variety of activities and opportunities that satisfy the diverse needs of students, and where appropriate, faculty, and staff, guests, alumni, and public participants.
3. Provide campus community with free or reduced-cost access to quality fitness facilities.
4. Offer educational opportunities such as workshops, lectures, and presentations regarding a wide variety of health and wellness topics.
5. Provide Personal Training and personal holistic evaluations for the campus community

The value of recreational sports on a college campus has become increasingly clear in recent years. The National Intramural Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) found that “participation in recreational sports programs is a key determinant of college satisfaction, success, recruitment and retention” (NIRSA 2004). Additionally, Hossler and Bean (1990) wrote that “recreational sports (i.e. informal leisure time, relaxation, games, intramurals) have been endorsed by institutions for their value in helping students maintain good physical health, enhancing their mental health by providing a respite from rigorous academic work, and teaching recreational skills with a carryover for leisure time exercise throughout life.”

The Fitness and Recreation Department offers an institutionally unique and powerful vehicle for creating a positive campus climate by bringing together students, faculty, and staff in a variety of events and activities, all of which focus on personal health and wellness. Whether playing or coaching a sport, attending a recreational field trip, using one of the fitness facilities, students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to engage with each other in fun, transformative experiences. It is the collective of these experiences that result in new relationships and connections, both interpersonally and institutionally, ultimately resulting in an increased sense of belonging, connectedness, and investment to MCC. This sense of connectedness has significant implications with regards to retention and satisfaction. And while there are several ways in which a sense of connectedness is developed, Fitness and Recreation offers a significant and important piece of this puzzle.

History and Evolution

The Middlesex Community College Fitness and Recreation Department has undergone a transformation in recent years that includes both the services and facilities as well as the name and mission of the department. Once a minor component of the Student Activities Department, Fitness and Recreation has, in a short time, established itself as an independently functioning unit. Technically still associated with Student Activities, Fitness and Recreation has grown to become a specialty branch with a unique purpose, identity, and clientele.

Early records indicate staff included 1 part-time coordinator of recreation for the 1990-1991 academic year. This was a major time of transition for the college (soon to open the City Campus and in its last years at the Burlington and VA Campus). It was not until 1992, with the opening of the Fitness Center, that there were signs of a potential organized fitness and wellness initiative from the Student Affairs area.

In the early years of the College, there existed a vibrant and active sports program. Though records of the sports program have been nearly impossible to locate (limited largely to photos in the MCC yearbooks), there are a few specifics that are certain. Funded by student fees, Middlesex hired coaches, purchased uniforms, offered transportation and space for this extra-curricular priority. Upon completion of the development of the Bedford campus, a designated gymnasium offered students the space to compete socially and competitively. At its historic peak, teams were afforded an adequate operating budget, providing funding for coaches, facilities, and equipment for several sports, including cheering, basketball, baseball, and hockey. This budget allowed the sports program to flourish, and alongside the MCC Mascot, the Cougars, brought a sense of pride and unity to the College Community. Student class schedules, grades, and general time constraints made for varying commitment levels and often close to forfeit numbers at games. Audiences varied, but were sometimes as few as a handful of onlookers. These participation rates and a sagging economy forced then College President Evan Dobelle to ask Student Government to consider its value to the College. By roughly 1988, Student Government voted to cancel the sports budget of \$100,000.00 and eliminated the program. There were a handful of small tournaments in the years following, but sports did not make a comeback until the collaboration with the University of Massachusetts Lowell's Intramural Sports Program in 2006. This recent revival continues to be primarily a social enterprise with a small percentage devoted to intercollegiate activity.

For many years the Fitness and Recreation Department was known to all primarily as the Fitness Center located in Bedford. Staff worked only out of the Bedford campus while the Student Activities Office in Lowell managed the sale of student memberships to a local athletic club. A decade ago, the Fitness Center attracted approximately 60 students on a weekly basis. (That has almost doubled in 2010.) It served its purpose as a place to work out. There was limited recruitment because there were only few opportunities with minimal attendance (e.g. CPR, self defense, and the occasional off campus ski trip). There was an annual "Sports Day" in Bedford on the last day of classes that included a barbeque and recreation. This has since evolved to the larger-scale "Spring Fling".

At the time, much of the focus was on maintaining the poorly enrolled Fitness Management Certificate Program (started in 2000), its few advisees, and the one-credit aerobics course required for the program.. After several years with few graduates, the Dean of Health Careers argued successfully to phase it out which was completed in less than 2 years. There were discussions at the time of researching and assessing the need and feasibility of offering a different certificate or degree program, perhaps with a sports management or other health/nutrition focus. This is still a hope for the future. Additionally there seems to be a demand from a larger population of students for credit-bearing physical education courses that are transferable to four year institutions.

It was clear at this point that the area needed to be revamped with a new image and outlook. Staffing changes, enhanced recreational programs, updated equipment and more was the beginning of the makeover. Jonathan Crockett was hired in May of 2006 to take this vision to the next level, market it and make it happen.

There have been significant structural shifts in recent years which include the following:

- The Coordinator Position grew to be a full time professional position in 2006. The Assistant Coordinator Position was eliminated in order to fund more paraprofessional staff (include 4-6 Fitness Center Assistants per semester) covering more hours and providing leadership training for students. Depending on the year, assistants might be elevated to a more “senior level” assisting with personal training and/or staff management.
- Volunteer Coaches have been added to the “staff” and work on a seasonal basis.

The department continues to be funded through the Student Activity Fund (SAF) derived from a portion of the Student Services Fee of \$25 per semester for students matriculated in 6 credits or more. Difficult fiscal times have not impacted the F&R department which has received small incremental increases for 3 years (decreasing other co-curricular funding in the process). However, the increase in staff, community partnerships and creative and collaborative initiatives, while allowing the department to blossom, have also required that some innovative programs be turned down or not even considered. Examples of innovative programs that have been neglected include:

- Creating a well-developed athletics program with intercollegiate competition, compensated coaching staff, transportation, and sports facilities.
- Creating state-of-the-Art Fitness Centers on both campuses
- Offering credit bearing courses (1 or 2) related to health and wellness
- Providing a robust recreation calendar with overnight ski trips, whitewater rafting, and other unique, exciting options
- Contracting more speakers to present on topics of health and wellness that appeal to the college community
- Building a full-sized, indoor basketball court
- Development of an MCC mascot
- Identifying student lounges that are dedicated only to student use (not for multiple set-ups and events)
- Providing pool tables on both campuses (in the aforementioned dedicated student lounges)
- Establishing Project Adventure (or a well-developed ropes course) in the Bedford Campus woods
- Developing an in-house Bootcamp Program, offered at a very low cost to the MCC campus community
- Creating a robust calendar of group exercise options, and strong efforts at recruitment and outreach for participants
- Development of additional sports teams, including softball, baseball, and lacrosse
- Development of the network of trails in the Bedford Campus woods – opening up more trails for use

Student contributions for events and activities have also risen to subsidize rising costs. While programs and services grow, technology and physical space have decreased. The Fitness Center, located on the Bedford Campus, no longer has the ability to scan member IDs as they enter requiring the use of an honor sign in system.

A partnership with the University of Massachusetts Lowell is the most notable change and allows Middlesex Community College students the right to participate in over 25 UML intramural sports as well as join their state of the art recreation center while matriculated in at least 6 credits at MCC. This relationship has benefited both institutions in a variety of ways and has offered a service to MCC students which is unprecedented. The first contract (*Appendix A*) was signed in 2006 resulting in termination of the agreement with The Club (previously held for at least 10 years). The new arrangement allows students access to a better quality facility with more fitness options. Ten years ago, records show 140 annual memberships to the local fitness club. That number has increased by 30% (not including summer memberships).

In January of 2004, the Vice President for Student Development retired and the department moved under the supervision of the new Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. A Dean of Students was also appointed to oversee the area. The Director of Student Activities reports to the Dean and the Coordinator of Fitness and Recreation to the Director. Outreach and recruiting methods are similar and include heavy presence (staff and student leaders) in high traffic areas and via classroom presentations. Publications (electronic and hard copy) have increased and are significantly improved.

Additional improvements to the program in recent years:

- Equipment upgrades
- Increase in Club Sports and Sport Teams
- Variety of Recreation Programs (inclusive of students AND faculty/staff)
- Personal Training/Holistic Wellness
- Health and Wellness programming
- Fitness Trail
- Student Lounge recreational resources (ping pong, foosball, electronic darts)

Internal partnerships with other divisions have increased participation rate. Faculty and staff from a variety of areas advise sports clubs and teams and receive support from their supervisors to do so. Their participation as mentors in the program has been critical to its success.

Previous Program Review

The last (and only other) Program Review (*Appendix B*) completed for this area was submitted over a decade ago. It was completed in 2000 and used data from a 35 question survey completed by 50 participants and a focus group on member satisfaction. Additionally 137 non-members filled out an additional questionnaire. In addition to satisfaction with the service, the primary goal of this review was to determine the quality of the equipment and services. The new format with attention to learning outcomes has allowed for a more comprehensive and meaningful study.

Over the years, there have also been inquiries made to colleagues within the Massachusetts Community College system for basic comparison on a variety of fitness and recreation issues. There were also several individual research based requests for improvements. Some examples include:

1996: Public Access and Fitness Center Membership Requirements considered

1999: Proposal for new Check-in and Student ID system to track member usage approved and purchased

2000: Feedback from Fitness Industry on Fitness Management Certificate Program prior to start of program

2000: Health Evaluations of Users changed to liability waiver

2001: Academic Course Proposal: Anatomy and Physiology of YOGA

2007: Mascot revisited; researched; proposed and denied

Process

The current assessment offers an intense look at all components of the area including quantitative and qualitative evaluation of offerings and student learning outcomes. Significant benchmarking, data collection, self appraisal, and a comprehensive external review process were considered in writing this document. Additionally, the CAS (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education) professional standards for higher education were used as an essential reference and provided specific guidelines for much of the review (*Appendix C*). It is referenced throughout this document along with other notable resources.

With the Coordinator of Fitness and Recreation, Jonathan Crockett, leading the committee of 3 key contributors (also including the Coordinator of Student Activities and the Director of Leadership Development and Student Activities), the review lasted an academic year with monthly team meetings and individual work on various pieces. These 3 people were chosen due to the direct nature of their job descriptions to the area responsibilities and the intense collaborations that exist between F&R and Student Activities. Additional stakeholders have been identified to participate on future program review teams and include faculty, students, alumni and MCC and community partners. Four half-day retreats allowed for collaborative review and joint work on the matrixes.

The committee focused primarily on reviewing intramural sports and the learning outcomes associated with them. An extensive survey was distributed to all student athletes to collect information relating to their sense of investment resulting from their experiences on sports teams (*Appendix D*).

For assessment purposes, the committee recognized the value and necessity in making the distinction between “participant” and “actively engaged”. A *participant* is a student athlete who engages in activities as they are convenient and interesting for him or her. Participants typically engage in activities such as attending a sporting event (as a spectator), or participating in very short-term (1 or 2 time) sports events, such as 1-day tournaments. Conversely, *actively engaged student athletes*, in addition to participating, make a lasting commitment to a sports team/club. Actively engaged student athletes typically spend time on a regular basis (often an hour or more each week) contributing to planning or implementation of games or practices, and/or making efforts to frequently attend. Examples of active engagement include student athletes who commit to a soccer, basketball, bowling, hockey, running, flag football, or volleyball team.

Many people have different perceptions about the meaning of sense of community. A widely held academic definition of this term is *“the sense of community is a feeling members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and the group, and a shared faith that member’s needs will be met through their commitment to be together”* (McMillan and Chavis, 1986). For assessment purposes, however, the committee also recognized the importance of defining a “sense of investment” as it relates to a students’ perceived sense of connection to the institution. Though the phrase “sense of investment” is defined in a multitude of ways for a variety of different circumstances, the committee created a definition that applies most directly and appropriately to the assessment. In this case, *“sense of investment” refers to a student’s perceived level of personal connectedness and belonging to the institution, and his/her overall desire to be actively involved in College sponsored co-curricular activities, (often with the knowledge) that time and effort invested will result in positive personal growth and development, and a deeper connection to the institution.*

The Cohort

The cohort for this study is comprised of actively engaged student athletes who participate in formal/informal sports clubs or teams. Club/team coaches and advisors, team captains, and Student Activities and Fitness and Recreation professionals identified actively engaged student athletes throughout the year. There were 72 students who made up this group during the 2009-2010 academic year. Of those, the following demographics were noted: (*Appendix E*)

11% are female (8) and 89% (64) are male. (*Note: for the OVERALL student population at MCC, 58% are female and 42% are male*)

74% are white (53), 11% are Black/African American (8), 10% are Hispanic (7), 4% are Asian (3) and 1% are non-resident alien (1). (*Note: for the OVERALL student population at MCC, 70% are white, 6% are Black/African American, 11.4% are Hispanic, 10% are Asian and .9% are non-resident alien*)

The median grade point average for actively engaged student athletes at the end of spring 2010 semester was 2.26. Over 80% of the pool was in good academic standing as of June 2010.

49% of the cohort is enrolled in classes primarily in Bedford, while 38% is enrolled in classes primarily in Lowell. 74% of these actively engaged athletes enrolled in daytime classes, and 6% enrolled in evening classes.

63% of this cohort (45) is between 17-20 years of age. 36% are between 21-25 years of age (26). 1% are 26 and older (1).

89% of the identified pool live in Middlesex County with the greatest numbers in Lowell, Billerica, and Tewksbury. 9% live in Essex County, including Andover, Lawrence, and Lynn. Others come from Worcester County.

By academic program, 17% of the cohort represent the Liberal Studies program (12), while 15% represent the Business Admin transfer program (11), 14% represent Liberal Arts and Sciences (10), 13% represent the Criminal Justice program (9), and 9% represent Business Admin-Career (7).

4% of this cohort (3) graduated in Spring 2010, and 28% are enrolled for Fall 2010 (*Note – this data was collected in April 2010, before many/most students have registered for Fall 2010 courses)

Section II: Mission

Department Mission Statement

The Fitness and Recreation Mission Statement: *The MCC Fitness and Recreation Department supports learning and student success, encourages a lifetime appreciation for physical fitness and personal health/wellness, fosters human connection, and increases a sense of institutional belonging by offering access to fitness facilities, personal training, sports teams, workshops and presentations, and recreational courses and events.*

The Fitness and Recreation Mission Statement is the foundation for the department's work, and is evident in every aspect of the department's goals. Department goals are intentionally based on this mission, the CAS Standards, the College's mission, and strategic plans. In print, this mission statement is communicated primarily on the MCC web portal, where it can be found on the department's main page. In action, this mission can be seen as "alive and well" in the various program, initiatives, events, and activities that occur throughout the year.

Complementing the College's Mission Statement

The Fitness and Recreation mission complements the College's mission in a variety of way, including:

- Supporting personal growth for our diverse student body
- Developing and maintaining partnerships internally and externally
- Providing a strong foundation for college transfer and lifelong learning
- Offering vibrant co-curricular opportunities that reflect a broad array of interests
- Offering creative approaches to learning outside the classroom
- Contributing to a dynamic learning environment
- Promote opportunities for participating in the supporting, caring community

Some examples of the connections to the above are listed here:

The MCC student population is indeed diverse, and the *opportunities for personal growth* are many. The Fitness and Recreation Department provides opportunities for personal growth via participation in sports teams and clubs, workshops and sessions, presentations, and access to fitness facilities. Within these contexts, growth occurs in the areas of confidence, leadership skills, teamwork skills, communication, organization, self-control and sportsmanship, and discipline.

The success of the Fitness and Recreation Department depends largely on *developing and maintaining partnerships internally and externally*. Most of the sports teams participate in the UMASS Lowell Intramurals program – an external partnership that is critical to the MCC sports program, and membership access to the UML Recreation Center. Internally, many faculty/staff members are supportive of the Fitness and Recreation Department in a variety of ways – some serve as coaches/advisors, some attend scheduled events as participants, and some serve as regular participants in a wide-variety of events/activities that are offered, including: indoor walking group, Bootcamp, Fitness Trail construction/use, weight-loss challenges, running groups, trivia night, fac/staff basketball and softball games, use of the fitness facilities, and expressed support/enthusiasm for overall success of the program.

The Intramural sports program *provides a strong foundation for college transfer and lifelong learning*. MCC students who experience competition at the UML sports facilities, against other UML students, get a positive personal introduction to a local, quality university. Many of our students continue on from MCC to a 4-year program, and UMASS Lowell is often their first choice. However, it is the first-hand experience of being on the UMASS Lowell campus that for some students solidifies that decision, and for other students “plants a seed” in their mind, which later results in a successful transfer to UMASS Lowell (or another institution).

In the spirit of extra-curricular and co-curricular education, the Sports and Recreation Department contributes to a *dynamic learning environment*, AND offers creative approaches to learning outside the classroom. The opportunities for personal growth, skills development, increased awareness/perspective, and a different kind of education are abundant within this program. Whether attending a Nutrition presentation, a Self-defense demonstration/workshop, a Celtics game, a health/wellness fair, or an intramurals game – learning happens. Whether playing on a sports team, taking a walk on the Fitness Trail, or using one of the available fitness facilities – learning happens. This sort of learning includes, but is not limited to: social skills, communication skills, body awareness, and overall health/wellness awareness.

Members of the MCC community who participate in fitness and recreation sponsored activities and events are *active participants in the supporting, caring community*. There is a clear and palpable sense of community on most of the sports teams and clubs, in the Bedford Fitness Center, and in most of the “series-style” activities/groups that are offered (running groups, indoor walking, Bootcamp, trivia night, fac/staff softball and basketball games, weight-loss challenge). Through their participation on these activities, participants feel that they are part of a supportive, caring community. In some cases, participants recognize that community to be the larger MCC community – in other cases, participants recognize it only as a smaller community, specific to the activity/event they are involved with.

Section III: Program Description

Structure and Funding

The department continues to be funded through the Student Activity Fund (SAF) derived from a portion of the Student Services Fee of \$25 per semester for students matriculated in 6 credits or more. Difficult fiscal times have not impacted the Fitness and Recreation Department which has received small incremental increases for 3 years (decreasing other co-curricular funding in the process). However, the increase in staff, community partnerships and creative and collaborative initiatives, while allowing the department to blossom, have also required that some innovative programs be turned down or not even considered. Student contributions for events and activities has also risen to subsidize rising costs. The current budget breakdown is as follows:

- Approximately \$17,000 of the SAF is reserved for salaries for the paraprofessional support
- \$18,000 for Fitness Center maintenance, UML Recreation Partnership, and Recreational activity
- \$5000 for Intramural and competitive sports fees
- \$2000 for Wellness related initiatives, courses and programs

The \$42,000 earmarked for the Fitness and Recreation Department is 22% of the overall allocated budget for student programming. Additionally, any revenue generated from UML memberships (\$15 per month) helps to cover the cost of the UML payments as agreed in a 3-year contract and revenue generated from CPR participant fees cover instruction for those classes. Additional monies (in minimal amounts) from field trips, merchandise (protein shakes and bars), and minor equipment sales (ping pong balls, foosball games) also contribute to the overall revenue.

Outreach and Recruiting

Outreach and recruiting are always a priority for the Fitness and Recreation Department. With the UMASS Lowell Intramurals collaboration in effect since 2006, the campus community has become increasingly aware of the existence of sports teams at MCC. Flyers and posters invite students to join various teams. The annual student leader awards ceremony includes recognition of sports teams and team leadership. The Admissions Department informs prospective students about sports opportunities at MCC. The MCC website highlights sports opportunities. Increasingly, students enroll at MCC with an initial awareness of the sports teams that they can choose to get involved with – an awareness that happens through institutional literature, the admissions office, and word of mouth from friends and family who have attended MCC recently. Recruitment also happens informally – as a community college many attendees have friends in local high schools, and these friends often played sports together in high school. Quite often then, students will reach out to high school “buddies” to invite them to play on the MCC team with them, thus creating an annual cycle of replenishment to the teams.

Systems and Procedures

The existence of systems and procedures supports the overall success of the sports program at Middlesex Community College. Students are encouraged to sign up for various sports on either campus, at one of three different locations (Bedford or Lowell Student Activities Office or Bedford Fitness Center). At the time of this report, three teams have at least 1 fac/staff coach or advisor, and at least 1 team captain. Captains and coaches/advisors receive informal training and guidance, and ongoing support throughout the year, related to their roles with the team. All student athletes are required to sign liability waivers (*Appendix F*) before the season starts, and to maintain academic enrollment status and good academic standing in order to maintain their eligibility on the team. Behavioral issues are handled by the MCC Dean of Students, the coaching staff (if very minor), and by the UMASS Lowell Intramurals staff as well (if necessary). Additionally, while all Intramurals teams accept players regardless of experience, the MCC Hockey Team (as part of an intercollegiate league) holds tryouts and makes cuts in order to define their team roster.

Partnerships

The sports teams at MCC are successful largely due to the partnership with the UMASS Lowell Recreation Center. This partnership allows students, faculty, and staff to participate in the Intramurals Sports program at UMASS Lowell. This is a tremendous benefit to MCC because of our significant lack of sports facilities and resources. For roughly \$14,000 annually (paid by the Student Activities budget), MCC students are allowed to participate (at no cost individually) in a wide variety of sports as part of the intramurals program. (The \$14,000 also allows MCC students to purchase discounted membership to use the UMASS Lowell Recreation Center).

The Intramurals Program provides access to sports facilities, game officials, a game schedule, and a lot of competition with other student teams. Without this partnership, MCC would not be able to provide the quality, variety, and access to such sports options, if any. One of the mutual benefits of this partnership is that the UMASS Lowell intramural teams seem to enjoy the opportunity to play against another college, as it provides an enhanced sense of competition. For MCC students, the opportunity to play sports in a UMASS Lowell facility is sometimes a transfer motivator as well, as many MCC students end up transferring into a 4-year program at UMASS Lowell.

Innovative Practices

The collaborative relationship with UMASS Lowell (as described previously) has proven to be an innovative practice. Essentially, it allows MCC to provide sport team opportunities when otherwise there would be very few. This sharing of resources becomes a win-win strategy for both institutions – UMASS Lowell gets some “outside competition”, increased participation in their intramurals program, increased exposure to the institution, and an annual cash payment from MCC. MCC greatly benefits by having access to facilities, teams, sports, schedules – the entire intramurals program, at no cost to them individually. In this sense, this collaborative relationship is especially innovative, and especially beneficial.

Nationwide Best Practices and Benchmarking

A survey instrument of twenty six questions was created by the Assessment Team and disseminated to twenty six colleges (**Appendix G**). Every college contact person received an email with a survey monkey link to complete the survey regarding Fitness and Recreation at the respective college. Of the respondents, eleven colleges are Massachusetts Community Colleges and fifteen are schools that have been designated as “like schools” by MCC’s institutional research department. Out of the twenty-six colleges, fourteen institutions responded to the survey monkey yielding a 53.8% participation rate.

The purpose of this survey was to research fitness facilities, recreational programs and resources available at other “like” institutions. Results demonstrate the variety of responses from school to school. Some colleges have similar resources while others differ greatly in the structure, function and purpose. The last question on the survey asked staff members to share up to three best practices. These responses varied greatly from one institution to the other, see notable highlights below.

Notable highlights of the Benchmarking Study

Best Practice Highlights

- *North Shore Community College, Danvers, MA:* Pick-up games, tournaments and Zumba classes.
- *Calhoun Community College, North Tanner, Alabama:* Academic advisors for sports participants.
- *Berkshire Community College, Pittsfield, MA:* Fitness center, outdoor pool and renting out fields to local youth leagues.
- *Quinsigamond Community College, Worcester, MA:* Top three sports are men’s and women’s basketball, baseball and softball.
- *Holyoke Community College, Holyoke, MA:* Nationally ranked women’s soccer, women’s basketball and golf.
- *Mount Wachusett Community College, Gardner, MA:* Programs for older adults and youth summer camps.
- *Massasoit Community College, Brockton & Canton, MA:* Intercollegiate athletic program, Zumba, basketball intramurals program.

Other Survey Highlights

- MCC has the second largest student enrollment after Calhoun Community College.
- Every institution has a cardio and weight area in their fitness center.
- Three institutions charge a membership fee to the public ranging from \$20 to \$40 a month.
- Most institutions have a combination of a sign in sheet and electronic swipe card for gaining access to the fitness center.
- Yoga, Pilates, spin and ZUMBA are some of the popular classes or programs offered at some of the institutions. Of all the special classes or programs, Zumba emerged as the most popular class at a few of the institutions.
- Norwalk Community College offers exercise science and physical therapist assistant lab space at their fitness center which is run by students in that major.
- With regards to staffing: 9 institutions have at least one professional staff member and student staff, 5 institutions have coaches, 2 institutions have assistant coaches, 2 institutions have proctors, 3 institutions have work-study, 4 institutions have student interns, and 6 institutions have instructors.
- 63.6% of those who responded to question sixteen indicated that they do pay their coaches, 78.6% indicated that their proctors or student staff are not certified personal trainers and 71.4% said their proctors and student staff are certified in CPR.

- The most popular sport offered is basketball with 81.8% of respondents offering the sport at their institution. Following basketball are soccer and baseball tied for 54.5% and Volleyball at 45.5%.
- The most popular recreation program offered at institutions is hiking trips. Responses for this question were low which may indicate that the institutions do not offer many recreational programs.
- Professional association affiliations include MCCAC (Massachusetts Community College Athletic Conference) with 54.5%, NIRSA (National Intramural Recreational Sports Association) 18.2% and the majority of institutions indicated involvement with NJCAA (National Junior TBA) One other institution is affiliated with the American College of Sports Medicine and National Strength and Conditioning Association.
- Institutions responded that they have the following recreation facilities:
 - 3 have indoor swimming.
 - 10 have indoor basketball courts.
 - 4 have studios for classes.
 - 3 have outdoor basketball courts
 - 5 have outdoor tracks.
 - 7 have outdoor fields.

The Schools below Set the Standard for Fitness and Recreation Programs by the survey responders:

- Springfield College, recommended from 3 institutions
- Norwalk Community College, Wellness and Exercise Science Associates Program. All curriculum meets the ACSM knowledge, skills, and abilities for the Health Fitness Specialist
- Southern Connecticut State University
- Holyoke Community College (facilities), recommended from 2 institutions
- Shelton State Community College, Alabama
- UMass Lowell Intramurals Program

In comparison:

- One item that stands out the most is that MCC offers many recreational programs with very limited resources. For the number of students enrolled at MCC, fitness and recreation space on our campuses is severely absent.
- MCC offers a significant number of recreational events each year in addition to the collaboration with UML intramurals program.
- After reviewing the best practices question it is clear that Fitness and Recreation programs vary greatly from one institution to another. For instance, some schools are involved with intercollegiate athletics while others are overseeing summer camp programs. Some institutions pride themselves in their sports programs while others do not offer sports at all.

As part of our Benchmarking process, we also discovered that Yoga, Pilates, spin and ZUMBA are some of the more popular group exercise classes or programs offered at other comparable institutions, with Zumba as the **most** popular overall. The recent completion of a new fitness studio on the MCC Bedford Campus (opened Fall 2010) has allowed the facilitation of a ZUMBA class and a Fitness Fusion class, both offered twice a week for 60 minutes each, and open to all MCC faculty, staff, and students. This space also provides open floor space and exercise equipment for individuals/groups looking for a variety of types of non-machine exercise or activities (stretching and floor exercises, indoor walking group, meditation group, performing arts class, and CPR classes). The first semester of this new space being opened saw very little use, but with the development of a full-schedule of free, video-guided exercise classes this semester, participation has increased.

Constituencies Impacting the Department

There are a variety of constituencies that impact and affect this program. On an internal level, the success of this program is affected by coaches and advisors, by the MCC Wellness Committee, by the Admissions Department, Student Government, and the Student Activities Office. On an external level, the program is affected by organizations such as NIRSA (National Intramural Recreational Sports Association) and UMASS Lowell, and industry standards such as those provided by CAS (Council for the Advancement in Higher Standards) in the *CAS Recreational Sports Program Standards and Guidelines*.

The role of the coaches/advisors is invaluable to this program – the coaching staff provides critical, no-cost support and guidance to the various teams, which is vital to both the short-term and long-term survival of any team. The Wellness Committee, as a product of the Human Resources Department, helps establish and integrate value-statements about the importance of health/wellness at MCC. As faculty and staff become increasingly aware of the benefits of regular exercise as part of a health/wellness program, they will be more likely to embrace opportunities to serve as advisors/coaches, and also more likely to encourage their students to get involved with sports/recreation opportunities. The Admissions Department plays a significant role in sharing important information with prospective/incoming students. The success of athlete recruitment for various teams has a great deal to do with how effective the Admissions Office is with providing information about sports and recreation opportunities at MCC. The Student Activities Office allocates critical funding for the sports teams – without this funding, the teams would not be able to exist. The Student Activities Office also serves as an “activities clearinghouse”, providing information to students about the sports teams/clubs.

External constituencies are also very important – most notably the UMASS Lowell Recreation Center. Because of limited facilities, the partnership with the UMASS Lowell Recreation Center is critical to allow participation in their Intramurals program, affording MCC students access to sports facilities, competition, scheduled games, officials, and exposure to another institution. NIRSA also plays a role as an external constituent, setting a variety of standards for a viable, thriving, productive recreational sports program. In this case, NIRSA standards are infused into the development and implementation of the UMASS Lowell Intramurals program, of which MCC student athletes are directly affected through participation. Finally, CAS Standards provide invaluable, comprehensive contextual information that help highlight strengths and deficiencies of services and programs.

Adequacies/Inadequacies

In order to accurately and objectively review the adequacies and inadequacies of the Fitness and Recreation Program, the committee independently read and completed the CAS Self-Assessment (*Appendix H*). This guide asks staff to make judgments about a wide range of program expectations. Upon completion, the committee members revealed responses and were not surprised to learn that similar perspectives were shared by all.

This process helped to identify discrepancies between current departmental practices and resources and the standards set by CAS. An action plan for addressing the inadequacies can be found in Section VI.

There are several standards to consider when reviewing sports and recreation programs. These are: mission, program, leadership, organization and management, human resources, financial resources, facilities, technology, and equipment, legal responsibilities, equity and access, campus and external relations, diversity, ethics, and assessment and evaluation. In sum, most of these standards were well or fully met (highlights from the assessment appear below).

Strengths

- The Fitness and Recreation Department has developed a *mission statement* in place that clearly articulates the department's vision, intentions, and focus relative to the campus community. This mission statement is reviewed periodically, and incorporates student learning, development, and educational experiences. This mission statement also supports and is consistent with many aspects of the institution's mission statement.
- The *Fitness and Recreation program* promotes student learning and development that is purposeful and holistic, and has identified student learning and development outcomes that are relevant to its purpose. More specifically, this program effectively provides evidence of its impact on the achievement of student learning and development outcomes in the following areas: intellectual growth, effective communication, enhanced self-esteem, healthy behavior, meaningful interpersonal relationships, collaboration, and appreciation for diversity.
- *Leadership* of the Fitness and Recreation Department fully meets the needs of the program. The program leader applies effective practices that promote student learning and institutional effectiveness, prescribes and practices appropriate ethical behavior, recruits, selects, supervises, instructs, and coordinates staff members, and applies effective practices to educational and administrative processes. Additionally, the program leader deals effectively with individuals and environmental conditions that inhibit goal achievement, and strives to improve the program in response to evolving student needs and institutional priorities.
- *Organization and management* of the program is strong, and the program is structured purposefully and managed effectively. Channels are in place for regular review of administrative policies and procedures.
- The Fitness and Recreation program maintains strong *campus and external relations* by offering intramural sport opportunities to students, faculty, staff, and alums. Faculty and staff are utilized as team coaches/advisors – a model which helps to increase program awareness and participation amongst faculty/staff.
- *Assessment and evaluation* is a regular and ongoing part of this Program. An annual report is submitted annually, highlighting programs/events, best practices, goals, strengths, and weaknesses for the year. This annual document provides a great opportunity for reflection and evaluation, often resulting in positive changes. With the completion of this comprehensive Program Review, this program is also effectively employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to determine how effectively it's stated mission and student learning and development outcome are being met. Additionally, Program Review assessment employs measures that ensure comprehensiveness, and data collected includes responses from students and other affected constituencies – the results of these evaluations are used to revise and improve the program.

Weaknesses

- *Financial Resources* are the single biggest obstacle in the overall success of this department, and are directly related to other challenges listed below (human resources and facilities/equipment). This department accomplishes a great deal relative to its budget, relying heavily on the kindness of volunteer coaches, the fortunate partnership with the UMASS Lowell Recreation Center, the collection of athlete dues (ice hockey only). However, a larger budget would support the rental/lease/purchase of recreational space, providing adequate places/spaces for teams to practice and play more regularly. Increased financial resources would make it possible to add additional sports teams, which would draw more students into the program. Sports such as baseball, skiing, lacrosse, and swimming would be beneficial additions, but are cost-prohibitive based on the current budget. These improvements would certainly be appealing to a wider audience of students, and would result in increased participation rates.

- **Human resources** for this program are compromised largely by budget constraints, though the program is successful overall with making the most effective and creative use of human resources in the absence of appropriate funding. Most specifically, coaches should be compensated for their time and effort throughout the year – not necessarily at a “salary” level, but a monetary compensation that communicates institutional respect/appreciation, and encourages ongoing involvement and commitment (annual continuity) by the coaching staff. In addition, with so many responsibilities falling upon the Coordinator of this department, the need for an Assistant Coordinator is becoming increasingly apparent.

- **Equity and access** – all programs and services are provided on a fair and equitable basis, all services adhere to the spirit and intent of equal opportunity laws, and program policies and practices do not discriminate against any potential users. Three notable exceptions to access, however, are location/transportation, accessibility and accommodations for students with physical disabilities, and male/female disparities. Most sports are played on the UMASS Lowell Campus, which for many students is a challenge to get to, due to limited transportation options. Additionally, though students with physical disabilities are invited to participate on sports teams, there is no precedent set to indicate that their specific needs could be truly accommodated, which undoubtedly discourages students with physical disabilities from getting involved. Finally, while all intramural sports welcome men and women alike, MCC has seen very few female athletes – a reality which indicates a lack of comfort, and ultimately lack of perceived accessibility, for female athletes.

- **Facilities** are lacking, due primarily to limited resources. In order to maximize access, participation, sense of investment, program awareness and promotion, and student involvement, MCC would benefit greatly from having on-campus facilities to support recreational sports. The current model requires students to travel off-campus, to a location they are usually unfamiliar with, to play sports. This model certainly discourages a large number of potential student-athletes from getting involved. Additionally, because of the notable absence of recreational sports facilities, many students simply assume that the college offers no sports opportunities for students – the visible presence of on-campus sports facilities would clear up that misperception. Finally, the lack of sports facilities on-campus puts the sports program in a very vulnerable and fragile position – when/if our relationship with the UML Recreation Center is terminated, we will have almost nothing to work with in terms of options for recreational or intramural sports, and the program will be extremely compromised.

- **Recruiting a diverse population** is a priority for this program. This program nurtures environments wherein commonalities and differences among people are recognized and honored, resulting (to some extent) in a diverse population of student athletes. Cultural diversity on the teams is strong, reflective largely of the cultural diversity of our student enrollment. The program struggles to obtain gender diversity – there are very few women who participate in the sports program. Additionally, though not adverse to exploring this in the future, the program has struggled to address characteristics and needs of diverse populations when establishing and implementing policies and procedures. In an effort to increase participation rates amongst diverse and minority populations at MCC, this program is committed to making more efforts to recruit and retain student athletes from diverse and minority populations, including but not limited to students of Black/African American, Asian, and Hispanic origin, as well as female students. In comparing the demographics of students athletes as compared to OVERALL MCC student demographics, there is some disparity in percentages (see demographic information in section titled “The Cohort” – page 5).

Section IV: Program Effectiveness

Program Outcomes and Ongoing Assessment

The ongoing, annual assessment of the identified program outcomes will occur in a variety of ways, and will be reflected in the departments Annual Reports. Assessment tools will include qualitative and quantitative observations, formal and informal verbal evaluation and feedback, an annual assessment meeting, benchmarking in order to stay on top of current assessment trends, intuition, frequency of individual participation and quantity of total student participation. Program outcomes will be assessed with the following calendar in mind:

- Fitness and Recreation provides students with opportunities to actively participate in athletic/recreational sports teams and clubs at MCC (2009-2010).
- Fitness and Recreation provides students with free or reduced access to fitness facilities, and to certified and non-certified personal trainers (2010-2011)
- Fitness and Recreation provides students with educational/instructional workshops, classes, expos, and presentations that focus on topics of fitness, health, and wellness. (2011-2012)
- Fitness and Recreation provides students with a variety of formal, informal, on-campus, and off-campus, recreational events and activities. (2012-2013)

Program Outcome 2009-2010	What are the systems and procedures (processes) in place to achieve this outcome?	How is this outcome assessed for effectiveness and efficiency within the program/department?	How is this outcome assessed for effectiveness and efficiency by constituents outside the program/department (within and outside MCC)?
Fitness and Recreation provides students with opportunities to actively participate in athletic/recreational sports teams and clubs at MCC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UML intramurals program - Recreation clubs (bowling) - Sports teams (hockey) - Recruitment and registration 	Qualitative observation; informal verbal evaluation/feedback; intuition; benchmarking; frequency of individual participation and quantity of total student participation; CAS Formal surveys.	Students: informal qualitative feedback Coaches/advisors: informal qualitative feedback. Formal surveys.

Program Outcome Analysis of Evidence

During the 2009-2010 academic year, MCC Fitness and Recreation provided 9 sports team/club opportunities for students, including flag football, basketball, soccer, volleyball, hockey, bowling, dance, running, and martial arts. This included the involvement of 12 volunteer coaches/advisors, and the participation of nearly 175 MCC student athletes. This resulted in approximately 62 scheduled games (regular and post-season) and 98 scheduled meetings/practices.

Section V: Student Learning Outcomes

Student Learning Outcomes and Ongoing Assessment

Students who are actively engaged in Sports and Recreation programs will be able to:

- Demonstrate an increased sense of connection to MCC based on involvement with sports teams (2009-2010)
- Demonstrate an increased commitment to personal health and wellness, as well as making positive steps toward reaching health/fitness goals through attendance at a fitness facility (2010-2011)
- Demonstrate an increased awareness and knowledge about a specific topic of health/wellness based on their attendance or participation in an MCC sponsored health/wellness opportunity (2011-2012)
- Demonstrate an increased sense of investment in their overall MCC college experience based on their involvement with MCC-sponsored formal and informal recreational events and activities (2012-2013)

Opportunities and Activities for Achievement of SLO's

The ongoing, annual assessment of the identified program outcomes will occur in a variety of ways, and will be reflected in the department's Annual Reports. Assessment tools will include qualitative and quantitative observations, formal and informal verbal evaluation and feedback, an annual assessment meeting, benchmarking in order to stay on top of current assessment trends, intuition, frequency of individual participation and quantity of total student participation. Program outcomes will be assessed with the previous calendar in mind.

Learning Outcome	Activity A	Activity B
Demonstrate an increased sense of connection to MCC based on involvement with sports teams	Participation in sports team games and practices	Attendance at awards recognition ceremony
Demonstrate an increased commitment to personal health and wellness, as well as making positive steps toward reaching health/fitness goals through attendance at a fitness facility	Memberships and personal training services at a fitness facility	Participation in specialized, short-term group exercise initiatives and programs
Demonstrate an increased awareness and knowledge about a specific topic of health/wellness based on their attendance or participation in an MCC sponsored health/wellness opportunity	Participation in workshops or presentations	Attendance and participation in the annual health and wellness expo
Demonstrate an increased sense of investment in their overall MCC college experience based on their involvement with MCC-sponsored formal and informal recreational events and activities.	Participation in formal/informal on-campus events and activities	Participation in formal/informal off-campus events and activities

SLO Analysis of Evidence

- Demonstrate an increased sense of connection to MCC based on involvement with sports teams (2009-2010)

What is your student cohort for this DSLO?	What is the evidence – performance indicators – that the students in this cohort have achieved this DSLO?	How is that evidence obtained to indicate student achievement of this DSLO from this student cohort?
Actively engaged student-athletes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survey Monkey results - Observation - Student feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survey distributed and collected - Observing (coaches/advisors)

A survey distributed to over 600 students via the electronic SurveyMonkey tool yielded only a 6% response. This survey was sent to both an identified cohort of student athletes, and to students who are not involved with sports teams at the institution. *(Note: in a few areas of the survey we didn't provide response options that represented all circumstances, resulting in some "non-responses" which don't add up to 100%)*

Of the 36 surveys completed, 28% identified as having played a sport at MCC during the 2009-2010 academic year, while 72% did not play a sport during the year.

Of the students who DID play a sport, here are some notable highlights (10 respondents):

- 46% heard about sports from a faculty or staff member, while 36% heard about sports from another student.
- 80% got involved with a sports team to make friends, 70% to get exercise and improve health, 60% to improve their skill level in a specific sport, and 60% to have friendly competition.
- 90% gained friendship by being on a sport team, 80% felt more connected to MCC, 70% got exercise, 60% gained leadership experience, 60% improved sport-specific skills, and 60% had fun.
- 78% reported their involvement in sports as being "very important" to their overall MCC experience, while 22% reported it as being "somewhat important".
- 80% acknowledged that the sports program would be more inviting/appealing to them if MCC offered on-campus facilities, 70% want organized practices during the season, 60% would like intercollegiate competition, and 40% would like to see tryouts and cuts in team roster.
- **100% indicated that they believe it is important for MCC to have a sports program.**
- **89% indicated that they believe sports teams can help create a sense of community and culture on a college campus.**

Of the students who DID NOT play a sport, here are some notable highlights (26 respondents):

- 69% were aware that MCC has sports team and sport club.
- 53% avoided getting involved with sports because they don't have enough time, and 23% didn't know we have sports at MCC.
- **96% indicated that they believe sports teams can help create a sense of community and culture on a college campus.**
- **96% believe it is important for MCC to have a sports program.**
- 73% believe we should offer basketball, 58% want baseball, 52% want soccer, 49% want dance, 46% want running, and 46% want softball.

Most striking from this survey is the strong and clear message from nearly all respondents, both athletes and non-athletes, is that it is important for MCC to have a sports program, in part because they believe sports teams can help create a sense of community and culture on a college campus. While the mission and goals of the Department operate with this belief in mind, it is particularly meaningful to hear this directly from students. Further proof of this sentiment is captured by several student quotes/comments, as highlighted here:

“[MCC sports] give me the opportunity to try things I've never done before and to continue with things I have done and enjoy doing. Also it gets me moving and doing something and helps keep me healthy and fit. And of course the best part of all is meeting and making new friends and feeling connected to MCC! MCC PRIDE AND SCHOOL SPIRIT!” - (MCC athlete)

“Having a sports program gives MCC Students the feel of a larger school and larger picture. It helps students to connect with one another, and gives it that well rounded educational feel.” - (MCC athlete)

“I absolutely feel that sports teams create a sense of community and culture. It brings the students together as a community.” - (MCC athlete)

“Sports teams need a certain amount of trust to function properly, and when that trust is built, a sense of community within the team is built too.” - (non athlete)

“They create a sense of community and culture by opening doors to making new friends from all over Massachusetts, and staying actively involved with the college as well as in everyday life. It feels good to be involved in activities at school with people who share the same interests as you.” - (non athlete)

“Some kids find it easier to open up and talk to their peers if they can find a common denominator in sports or activities.” - (non athlete)

“It is difficult to stay involved in organized sports after high school, especially for community college students. As someone who has found sports incredibly cathartic throughout my life, I would love to participate.” - (non athlete)

“It is vital to a well rounded Human Being!” - (non athlete)

In addition to the student voice regarding the MCC sports program, it is important to acknowledge the coaches/advisors. For the purposes of this study, coaches and advisors were informally surveyed about their own experiences with these sports teams and student athletes. Across the board, coaches and advisors expressed pride and satisfaction with their respective teams, and talked about an increased sense of connection to students, to other coaches or advisors, and to the campus community in general, as a result of serving as a coach or advisor. One of these sentiments is captured in the following post-season e-mail sent out to student athletes on a basketball team:

“Personally, I learned a lot about all of you as individuals and as a team. Your efforts during the season, especially in the playoffs, were outstanding. [Co-coach] and I were extremely proud of all you. I hope it demonstrated to you that when individuals believe and trust in each other, great things can be accomplished. I want all of you to know that [co-coach] and I only wish the utmost success for you as players and as students. Despite how hard I can be on you during practice and the during the games, my passion is only an extension of how much I care for you guys as players, students, and individuals. Once you guys join the MCC basketball club it's like we're family. And like any family there are good and bad moments. But with family you always know the passion and the love is there. That's the way [co-coach] and I approach this basketball club. I don't want to get too emotional even though I already have, but I want to make sure to tell all of you that you are welcome and wanted on next year's teams. With the talent we have on both teams there will be no stopping us next year!”

	Activity A	Activity B	Activity C	Activity D
Personal and Professional Development	Sports teams provide students with opportunities to connect with other students, faculty, and staff and to feel invested in the MCC college experience	Sports teams provide students with leadership opportunities (captains and co-captains)	Sports teams provide an opportunity to demonstrate sportsmanship, both on and off the court/field	Sports teams provide students with opportunities to demonstrate accountability by being an integral and necessary part of a team

While other ISLOs are touched upon in some ways, the Fitness and Recreations Department’s goals and responsibilities relate primarily to the Personal and Professional Development Institutional Student Learning Outcome. The Global Perspective ISLO expects students *to recognize and appreciate the ways in which people in their community, nation and throughout the world are increasingly interconnected*, and sports teams also provide an opportunity for that kind of awareness to occur.

Section VI: External Review Highlights

The External Review experience has proven to be one of the most valuable experiences associated with this Program Review – it provided an opportunity to “see” this program through careful observations/reflections and recommendations made by an external consultant. The consultant feedback is thorough, thoughtful, often bold, affirming, challenging, specific, and compelling. In order to maintain the integrity of the external consultant feedback, these highlights will be provided as direct text from the External Program Review document. (The complete External Program Review can be found as *Appendix J.*)

These highlights represent a vast majority of the feedback provided in the written external review document. While we do not necessarily agree or disagree with these highlights, they are all worthy of present and future review and consideration. Some of these highlights are explored in greater detail in the Action Plan/Anticipated Needs section of this Program Review.

Program Strengths (as identified by the External Program Review)

Fitness and Recreation Leadership: It is clear that you have the right person serving as Coordinator of Fitness and Recreation at MCC. Jonathan Crockett is well respected on campus and has made numerous improvements during his tenure. Many of the following program strengths can be directly attributed to his leadership of the program. He also displays professionalism and an appreciation of the big picture issues facing MCC and is very positive in his attempts to consistently improve the program while overcoming some obvious obstacles.

Welcoming atmosphere in the Fitness Center and all Fitness and Recreation Programs: This is clearly a reflection of Jonathan’s personality and approach to student and faculty/staff relationships. His friendly, non-judgmental, and welcoming approach is being felt by all patrons and is clearly embraced by his student staff.

Collaborative Relationship with UMass Lowell Campus Recreation: While this relationship is being felt most from the students on the Lowell Campus, it is clear that participation in UML Intramural Sports and the opportunity to take advantage of a state of the art Recreation Center is positively impacting the MCC students. This impact is highlighted throughout the draft co-curricular program review document.

Opportunistic Approach: Given the lack of resources afforded to the fitness and recreation program, it provides a surprising array of programs. The Fitness and Recreation program is always trying something new. It is clear that Jonathan is seen as a good programmer and that suggestions are regularly sent his direction. Given the lack of on-campus indoor recreation space, Fitness and Recreation is obviously trying to make the most of the opportunity to develop outdoor recreation space at a low cost to the college. They also rent additional facility space for students to practice basketball and other sports at UMass Lowell. Programs such as the 5K race and bicycle challenge are examples of the recognition of the Bedford Campus strengths and attempts to take advantage of them.

Fitness and Recreation Approach to College Student Programming: Given the themes of scarcity of resources, student engagement, sense of community, and co-curricular education, I believe MCC has made a very wise decision to approach sports and fitness from a recreation mind set. Recreation programs are a very affordable way to develop the whole student, increase student engagement and satisfaction as well as create a lasting relationship between the student and the institution. Based on research by the 2002 Kerr and Downs Research Report provided in *The Value of Recreational Sports in Higher Education*, “Students agree that participating in recreational sports resulted in the following wide range of benefits (in priority order):

1. Improved emotional well-being
2. Reduced stress
3. Improves happiness
4. Improves self-confidence
5. Builds character
6. Makes student feel like part of the college community
7. Improves interaction with diverse set of people
8. Is an important part of college social life
9. Teaches team-building skills
10. Is an important part of the learning experience
11. Aids in time management
12. Improves leadership skills.

There was a direct correlation between the level of participation and the degree to which students received the benefits listed above.”

Faculty/Staff Morale: Based on testimony from staff members it is possible that Fitness and Recreation Programs may have as much or more impact on the morale and well being of faculty and staff as it does on the MCC student population. The staff interviewed mentioned connecting with people across division lines, improvement in personal health/wellness, and a general improvement of the overall employment experience because of involvement in Fitness and Recreation programs.

Faculty/Staff Advisor Involvement: Faculty and Staff advisors are also playing a key role in coaching sports teams and serving as mentors to the students. Faculty/Staff coaching of intramural programs is very rare, but shows a clear dedication to helping the students succeed.

Risk Management: The Fitness Center Staff are all CPR/AED certified and there is an AED on site in the Fitness Center. The Fitness Center Staff are allowed to leave the facility unattended for short periods times, which I believe should be changed, but overall this level of training is appropriate for the function they serve.

Program Weaknesses (as identified by the External Program Review)

Fitness Center: Based on recommendations by the American College of Sports Medicine the fitness center is dramatically too small to serve the MCC population. Documentation on this information can be found in the ACSM Health/Fitness Standards and Guidelines.

My professional opinion is that in its current state, the Fitness Center is a detriment to MCC, not an asset. The extremely small size, age/condition of the equipment, and condition of the overall facility (flooring, walls, and ceiling) are all acting more as a deterrent to the development of a healthier lifestyle rather than promoting the benefits stated in the strengths section. Given that the Fitness Center serves as the home base for Fitness and Recreation Programs, I believe it has a negative affect on overall programmatic success.

Recommendation for Improvement: In the long term, I believe serious consideration should be given to either building a facility for fitness and recreation programs or renovation an existing space on campus.

In the short term, I have the following recommendations:

1. Work to create an environment that feels professional, safe, well maintained, and comfortable.
2. Remove the punching bag, as it detracts from the feeling of safety and comfort.
3. Remove old equipment and consult with a fitness company to determine the appropriate number of pieces of equipment for the current size and layout in the fitness center. Invest in upgrading equipment. Cardio and free weight equipment should be made the priority. Only keep or invest in key selectorized machines that warrant the significant space required. Keep in mind that given the space restrictions, less is more.
4. Replace old, likely unsanitary rug with a new flooring option. (See ACSM Health/Fitness Standards and Guidelines recommended flooring options.) Repair and paint walls as well as replace water-stained ceiling tiles. Test air quality in the fitness center at peak usage time to determine if the HVAC is appropriate for an exercise facility.

Institutional Vision for Fitness and Recreation Programs: I asked one question at all levels, “What do you hope Fitness and Recreation will look like 5 or 10 years from now?” It was hard for those interviewed to answer the question. I believe it would be very helpful for members of the MCC community at all levels to be engaged in strategic planning related to Fitness and Recreation Programs and how they will contribute to the overall success of the college now and into the future. While an opportunistic approach has benefits, having a strategic and integrated plan would be far superior. I believe that creating focus in the Fitness and Recreation programs will allow for more long term success.

Marketing: The marketing of Fitness and Recreation Programs with a focus on connecting with students must improve. Perception is reality and the public perception that MCC is presenting to students is that you have a small run down fitness center and a website that does not work and does not provide necessary information.

Fitness Center recommendations have already been made so I will focus my recommendations on the website and other marketing materials.

1. As one college student said to me a few years ago, “If it doesn’t have a website, it doesn’t exist.” The current MCC Fitness Center website is hard to find. Has many links that don’t work and does not provide any information related to the upcoming programs being provided.

2. Programs should be determined and set in the summer months and marketing materials should be provided to the students at the beginning and throughout the academic year. Common and effective marketing materials are calendars with all fitness and recreation programs and services, mini flyers handed out to students on upcoming programs, emails to current and former participants.

3. Recreation programs can be one of the most exciting parts of a college student’s experience. It would be wise for MCC to include recreational programming as part of the mailings that are sent to potential students as well as the marketing materials provided at school recruiting visits. If part of the reason a student chooses MCC is the fitness and recreation programs, it will be a lot easier to engage them once they come to campus.

Reporting Structure: This recommendation may be viewed as controversial because no one interviewed gave any indication that the reporting structure was an issue. That being said, with the growth of the Fitness and Recreation Program and the potential for further growth in the future, I believe it is time for the Fitness and Recreation Program to be seen as an independent department and report directly to the area Dean. While Student Activities and Fitness and Recreation share some commonalities, the same can be said for the relationships that Fitness and Recreation has with Health Services and Counseling Services. It is very uncommon for Fitness and Recreation to reside within Student Activities. It is my opinion that the students would be better served with a strong voice for recreation reporting directly to the Dean.

Resources- Both Financial and Human: I support the recommendations from the self study that explain a significant lack of resources being committed to Fitness and Recreation Programs. While it appears that their funding has suffered less than most in this difficult time, the resources that are provided are not enough to accomplish its defined mission.

Lack of Informal Recreation Space: For a community college this is a very important issue. When the students were interviewed it became clear that their biggest concern was the lack of consistently available informal recreation and lounge space. They noted that they are allowed to use some space in the Student Center, but that space was inconsistently available and there was very little communication on when it is available. The students felt like this was a major deterrent to community building. I agree with their perspective. If you want students to feel like they are part of a community and take advantage of their time between classes, it would be a necessary to have somewhere they could call home. A student lounge should be developed with both active and passive recreation opportunities. The students are looking for things like ping pong, billiards, couches, TV and WIFI. While these are not traditionally Fitness and Recreation facilities, the students concern was strong enough that it seemed appropriate to include in this report.

Program Opportunities (as identified by the External Program Review)

Student Recreation Advisory and Programming Committee: Developing a student committee with a budget for them to spend would be a great way of engaging students and developing student leaders. You would hear what is important to students on regular basis and they would act as advocates in the student community.

Continued Development of Outdoor Recreation Space: One thing MCC has is outdoor space on the Bedford Campus. The fitness trail and basketball court are a good start. Serious consideration should be given to adding a disc golf course to the fitness trail. This would be an inexpensive way to get students to recreate in the outdoors.

Additional Collaboration: Collaborating on space is a very economical way to meet the needs of various programs. It is common for students to have to travel for recreation activities. MCC should be open to relationships similar to the collaboration with UMass Lowell. In addition to space, collaborating on programs is a great way to gauge interest and could lead to independent programming in the future.

Sport Clubs: MCC currently has an ice hockey club and a dance club. Further efforts should be made to provide a defined structure for students to start a Sport Club. Sport Clubs are a great way to develop engaged student leaders. Having a wide array of consistently successful Sport Clubs might be a challenge at MCC, but a defined and advertised method of starting a Sport Club is very important.

Student Recreation Facility Fee: Students want recreation and fitness facilities as part of their student experience. It is very common on campuses without recreation facilities to have a fee increase voted-on by student government in support of renovation or construction of new recreational facilities. It is worth trying to determine how important recreational facilities are to the students and if they would be willing to pay more to receive more.

Space Committee: Given that space is such an issue, I believe there would be value in the Coordinator of Fitness and Recreation sitting on the MCC Space Committee.

Membership to the National Intramural and Recreational Sports Association: NIRSA provides a wealth of professional development opportunities. The Coordinator of Fitness and Recreation Programs would benefit greatly from regular attendance at conferences, NIRSA research publications, and the NIRSA Listserv.

Building Traditions: I recommend developing some core programs that are offered every year and dedicate time/effort into making these traditions successful. I was given the sense that in an effort to do new initiatives, it was hard to maintain the effort to grow existing programs. New initiatives should be part of an overall strategic plan.

Program Threats (as identified by the External Program Review)

Continued Lack of Funding and Strategic Planning: While the improvements in the Fitness and Recreation Program are significant and MCC should be proud of its current state, further improvement will require both money and strategic planning.

Competition from other Institutions to Recruit Students: While it was stated that student recruiting was not a major concern at this time it is likely to be an issue in the future. With the predicted smaller high school student graduating classes in the coming years/decades as well as the increased competition for tuition dollars, it is inevitable that MCC, as all institutions, will be competing to recruit, retain, and educate students. Students are definitely factoring in the whole college experience when they decide where to attend. Providing a quality co-curricular education will be essential to attracting students.

Section VII: Conclusions

- Based on the qualitative and quantitative evaluation associated with this Program Review, in addition to the comprehensive external review process, it is clear that the Fitness and Recreation Department is honoring its mission, supporting the overall goals of the institution, and providing a valuable resource to students on campus, and therefore, the campus in general. As highlighted by the CAS Self-Assessment and the student survey, this department and especially the sports program meets or exceeds standards in most areas.
- The Fitness and Recreation Department collaborates extensively with internal and external partners to provide sports teams opportunities for students – opportunities that create a sense of community, investment, involvement, pride, and connection, and support the development of the “whole student”. In the absence of a variety of resources such as on-campus facilities and adequate funding, this program takes a collaborative, creative, approach to providing sports teams, relying heavily on staff/faculty volunteers, continued collaboration with UML, and student interest in playing sports.
- With the exception of the hockey team, which holds tryouts to create a team roster (resulting in players being cut from the team), all other teams are inclusive of any student who wishes to play, regardless of age, gender, race, ability, or any other factor. This model allows for side-by-side athletic experience between skilled athletes and beginners alike, offering a unique opportunity for true recreational interaction. This degree of inclusion creates, supports, and fosters a community of acceptance and tolerance, and provides a forum for lasting relationships and friendships to be built.
- As highlighted by comparative benchmarking with other similar institutions, however, as well as portions of the CAS Self-Assessment, this department also has some weaknesses. Most notable is the tenuous and uncertain future of sports teams at MCC. Currently, most sports are intramural sports, played in the UML intramurals program. This relationship relies on continued good relations, and the ability and willingness to pay an annual contract. Now 1 year into a 3 year contract, it is always possible that at the end of this contract, either UML or MCC will decide to opt out, bringing a swift end to sports at MCC. Other than the anticipated construction of a half-court outdoor basketball court on the Bedford Campus, MCC has no sports facilities.
- The coaching/advising staff has typically been selected with a degree of passivity, and with low expectations. Coaches and advisors have often been solicited by casting a wide net, and hoping for a volunteer to rise to the invitation/occasion. In the absence of compensation to offer, it has seemed unreasonable to impose many expectations of volunteer coaches. This “hands off” approach with coaches has been a lost opportunity to engage, train, encourage, and support coaches more actively, helping them to develop student leadership on the team, delegate appropriately, recruit effectively, and promote the team to the campus community.
- Thirty percent of the non-athlete students who completed the student survey were unaware that MCC has sports teams – this number is surprisingly high, and can not be blamed on students not being observant. Considering that 96% of the non-athlete students also agreed that having a sports program is important, and that sports teams help create a sense of community and culture on campus, there is clearly some work to do with raising awareness about our sports teams to the campus community.

- While it may not increase actual participation tremendously, it seems clear that many students, including non-athletes, recognize the value of having sports teams on campus. Promotion and awareness needs to occur and increase on many levels: game promotion/awareness, public displays of teams (community service events, promoting games, recruiting new members), ongoing department advocacy of program needs, classroom presentations, use of technology to get the word out to student population (especially new students), video clips of games played in conspicuous public areas on campus, etc.
- While this Program Review is intended to focus on student involvement in sports teams/clubs within the Fitness and Recreation Program, it seems important to acknowledge the depth and breadth of faculty/staff involvement as well, and the positive institutional impact that provides. Faculty/staff involvement, like student involvement, can be distinguished as either participant or actively engaged. Examples of fac/staff participation include the annual fac/staff basketball game, annual softball game, trivia night, fac/staff running group, infrequent use of the MCC Fitness Trail, or infrequent use of a fitness center (UMASS Lowell or Bedford). Fac/staff who are actively engaged serve as sport team coaches/advisors, or participate regularly in activities such as the fac/staff running group, Bootcamp, or regular attendance at a fitness facility.
- The Fitness and Recreation Department, as an integral part of the Student Activities Department, strives to support and enhance student success, to inspire a sense of institutional investment in the college community, and to support transformative education by offering a variety of co-curricular opportunities. By focusing on 5 critical departmental responsibilities, this department successfully contributes to the overall student experience at MCC - particularly for those students who actively choose to take advantage of opportunities provided by the Fitness and Recreation Department. As financial resources become more available for this Department, opportunities for further growth and outreach will increase. However, given the constraints of the currently allocated budget, facilities, equipment, and staff, this department is serving an important role to help enhance overall student success.

Action Plan/Anticipated Needs

Program Needs (Section III e. and VI)	Rationale	Proposed Plans for Improvement	Resources Needed for Improvement	Proposed Timelines for Implementation
Budget Increase	To compensate coaches, to rent or lease facilities for practices/games, to meet the growing needs of our community with health, wellness, and recreation activities	Alert VP and Provost of need	Larger operating budget (for more resources)	Request \$15,000 increase for FY12
MCC sports and recreation facilities	To provide basketball/volleyball and indoor soccer space and indoor studio space for student athletes	Alert VP and Provost of need	Institutional commitment to providing recreational facilities	TBD depending on financial climate – not prior to 2012
Stronger marketing and recruitment plans specifically targeting both ethnicity and gender	To increase awareness and participation in offered sports teams	Develop plans in advance; promote games and team activity more on campus	Staff time, proficiency with technology; word of mouth	Fall 2011
More staff (coaches, advisors, and administrators)	Teams are exponentially more successful with the support of an adult coach/advisor; increase awareness and participation	Create “job descriptions” for coaching positions, and distribute widely on campus. Solicit individuals as possible coaches.	Staff time; Stipend/compensation to make the position more enticing; approval of a new staff position	Summer 2011 (active recruitment of additional/new coaches)
Develop academic curriculum	To integrate wellness and recreation into curricular areas	Provide feedback and input related to the Road map Project, specific to the addition of “wellness/rec” into GenEd development	Opportunity to have a voice, either directly or by proxy, in the new curricular development of the GenEd courses	Spring/Summer 2011

The external review process provided a wealth of feedback and suggestions, some of which have already been implemented, some of which are currently in progress, and many of which will be explored and hopefully implemented in the future, as time and resources become available. Specifically, based on feedback from the external review, I have made low-cost changes in the Fitness Center to improve the feel and functionality of that space, by removing the punching bag, and removing two outdated and rarely used pieces of equipment. This has created a greater sense of openness and space in the Fitness Center – a change that has been noticed and appreciated by regular members.

Institutional Student Learning Outcomes: The Fitness and Recreation Department has also begun to think more deeply about ways in which the inherent value of the Fitness and Recreation Department can be asserted, recognized, and incorporated on an institutional level. By working closely with Elise Martin, Judy Wong, and Rebecca Newell with the hope of adding a “Wellness” component to the “Personal and Professional Development” ISLO, this critical addition would provide much institutional validity and credibility to institutional wellness, which the Fitness and Recreation Department will certainly be a significant resource for helping to provide. Coupled with the upcoming revisions for all GenEd curriculum to be inclusive/reflective of the soon-to-be revised ISLOs, this has significant implications for the development of wellness-related activities, events, and curricular and co-curricular opportunities.

Organizational Chart: It is the hope of the Department of Fitness and Recreation that some serious consideration be put into creating a Fitness, Recreation, and Wellness Department. This Department may continue to work closely with Student Activities and other Student Affairs areas, while asserting its own identity which has developed exponentially in the past decade. This simple addition to the organizational chart would serve as a visual representation of the value Middlesex Community College places on these services which have become an integral part of the College community.

Fitness Management Certificate Program: In 2002, MCC began offering a Fitness Management Certificate Program. In 2007, after this certificate program had suffered poor enrollment for several years, and it was decided to discontinue the program. Since then, a number of students and prospective students have expressed an interest in this program. Online resource ONET suggests a “much faster than average” growth in this field between 2008-2018, with a median annual income of \$30,670 (*Appendix I*). At MCC, where many of our academic programs focus on specific occupational training, the inclusion of a Fitness Management Certificate (or comparable) seems especially important. This certificate would allow graduates to enter the workforce as Certified Personal Trainers, or to continue their education in a relevant, more advanced study such as Physical Therapy or Sports Management in a 4-year bachelors program.

Credit-Based Curricular Options: Many students at MCC would benefit from having a 1-credit course available to them. For a variety of reasons, many students end up 1 credit shy of their needed course-load, and are forced to go without, or to take a 3-credit course, when they don’t need it. Offering a 1-credit Health and Wellness course would be ideal in many ways – it would meet the need of providing a 1-credit option, but on a topic that is universally valuable, and relevant to every student in a “real life” application. While there would certainly be students who enroll strictly for the 1-credit need (regardless of course content), the course topic is certainly applicable, relevant, beneficial, transferrable (in life, if not academically), experiential, and meaningful. The Fitness and Recreation Department would like to lead the charges on the development and implementation of this 1-credit Health and Wellness Course.

Further Investigation

Tracking Student Athletes Over Time: This Program Review provides some interesting information and insights, but also leaves some compelling questions which will require future studies. The median GPA for student athletes at the end of the Spring 2010 semester was 2.26. Without ascertaining the duration of a student's involvement on a sport team and tracking their GPA over time, it is impossible to determine whether involvement with a sports team has positively, negatively, or not at all affected their GPA. However, that information would be very revealing for assessment purposes. Compelling also is the question of transfer rate – what % of MCC students who play an intramural sport at UML end up transferring to UML, and how does that transfer rate compare to the UML transfer rate for the entire college campus? Additional questions for future studies include: what percentage of MCC student athletes eventually graduate from MCC, and how does that compare to the institutional graduation rate? Answers to all of these questions could provide more information about the value of sports as it relates to academic performance, retention, and institutional connection. While this information would have been especially valuable to this Program Review, there has not been adequate data collection and storage to make those comparisons possible.

Administer a pre/post impact survey: Future investigation will also likely involve a pre/post survey to ascertain the specific individual impact (benefits) of participation/involvement with a sports team at MCC. This survey-based investigation will be IRB approved, to support publishing and presentation of the results. In addition to the studied cohort, there will be a control group comprised of random students at MCC, in order to provide a baseline comparison. While this program review includes valuable qualitative data collected in part from a survey, that survey was administered only as a post-involvement tool, and was not IRB approved.

Impact of sports teams on enrollment decision: Another valuable investigation would be to survey athletes on specific sports teams, to determine if their intended participation in a specific sport impacted their decision to enroll at MCC. More specifically, informal observations and casual conversations with hockey and basketball team athletes suggests that many hockey and basketball players have enrolled at MCC specifically with a strong interest in playing either of those sports. Whether their potential involvement was a critical factor in the decision, or simply “icing on the cake”, has yet to be determined. However, if it turns out that students are making enrollment decisions based in part, or even largely, on interest in a specific MCC sport, that has significant implications for the importance of a comprehensive, developed, sports program on institutional recruitment efforts. This investigation might also be conducted in collaboration with the MCC admissions office. Increasingly over the past four years, MCC Admissions staff members have commented to me on the frequency of inquiries from prospective students about sport teams at MCC.

Section VIII: Appendix

<i>Appendix A</i>	UMASS Lowell Recreation Center Membership Contract
<i>Appendix B</i>	Previous Program Review
<i>Appendix C</i>	CAS Standards
<i>Appendix D</i>	MCC Student Survey and Survey Results (SurveyMonkey)
<i>Appendix E</i>	Student demographics information (Banner)
<i>Appendix F</i>	Sports Team Waiver
<i>Appendix G</i>	Benchmarking Materials
<i>Appendix H</i>	CAS Self-Assessment
<i>Appendix I</i>	Government Forecast Data for Fitness Trainers and Aerobics Instructors
<i>Appendix J</i>	External Consultant Program Review Materials (narrative and supporting documents)