

Business Plan for Missouri Southern State University's Intramural Sports Program

Jansen Adams

Senior Thesis

Missouri Southern State University

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## **Executive Summary**

The Intramural Sports program of Missouri Southern State University is constantly looking for ways to better the program. This business plan expresses ways that the program can adapt to achieve higher student and employee satisfaction. The Intramural Sports program offers a variety of sports ranging from basketball to table tennis. The program currently offers 22 sports throughout the course of one academic year.

The program strives to provide enjoyable activities and experiences for students, faculty, and staff of Missouri Southern State University. With a primary goal of increasing student satisfaction, the program also strives to promote Missouri Southern State University through organized recreational activities. Participants of intramural sports can expect to have more wholesome social relationships and to develop habits of exercise that can carry over into everyday life.

The primary users of the Intramural Sports program at Missouri Southern are traditional students, and the primary market is students who have participated in the past. The following business plan will demonstrate ways to reach out to underserved markets to help grow the program's participation levels. The business plan will also explain the advantages of the Intramural Sports program opposed to other leagues or activities in the area. This business plan gives a better understanding of the program as a whole and where it can go in the future.

## **Business Description**

The Missouri Southern State University's Intramural Sports program attempts to offer something for everyone on the Missouri Southern campus including students, faculty, and staff. The program is absolutely free for all students, faculty, and staff and is designed to provide opportunities to participate in a wide variety of recreational activities.

## **Business Concept**

The Missouri Southern State University Intramural Sports program must separate itself from its competitors in order to succeed. It is important to understand which aspects of the program can provide something new, something better, or reach an underserved or new market. There are several concepts that I suggest the program implement to provide something unique.

For the program to succeed it is vital to give the students what they want. After gaining a better understanding of the students' wants, I plan to improve the program by implementing weekend intramural sports. By providing this new concept of intramural sports on the weekend, the intramural sports program will be able to better serve part of the target market that the program has failed to assist in the past. The want and need for weekend intramural sports was supported by the survey in which 57 out of 140 students claimed they would participate in intramural sports. This is a large figure when you consider that only 27 students surveyed have participated in intramural sports within the last school year.

It is also important for the Intramural Sports program to remain free for all students, faculty, and staff. This concept helps differentiate the program and give the upper hand on its competitors. The program is simply better than its competitors because it is difficult to compete with.

## **The Mission Statement**

Missouri Southern State University's mission statement as stated on the school's website is, "Missouri Southern State University is a state-supported, comprehensive university offering programs leading to undergraduate and graduate degrees. Central to our mission is a strong commitment to international education, liberal arts, professional and pre-professional programs, and the complementary relationship that must exist among them to prepare individuals for

success in careers and lifelong learning (“Mission statement,”).” With this general concept in mind, the Intramural Sports program has created its own mission statement.

The Intramural Sports Program is designed to provide opportunities for the students, faculty and staff to participate in a wide variety of recreational activities. By participating in these team and individual sports, Campus Recreation hopes to provide you with the following opportunities:

- To provide enjoyable recreational experiences for the University community.
- To develop habits of participation that will carry over into everyday life.
- To promote wholesome social relationships and sportsmanship through group and individual activities.
- To provide an opportunity for the development of a healthy body along with an alert mind.
- To promote Missouri Southern State University through organized recreational activities.

### **Objectives**

Missouri Southern State University's Intramural Sports program is unique because of the difficulty to determine the revenue in a dollar amount. For the university, the intramural sports program is supposed to aid in student satisfaction. Students who are more involved on campus are likely to be more satisfied with the university as well as being more likely to stay at the school (Moffitt, 2010). In a study completed by John Miller (2011), “the results indicated that the recreation center was a main factor when choosing universities but also a main reason not to leave the university.” The recreation center also increased student satisfaction, sense of belonging, and responsibility to the university. Because of this it is determined that satisfaction is equivalent to revenue, but we do not know an exact dollar amount. So the goal of the Intramural

Sports program is to achieve the utmost satisfaction while using resources as efficiently as possible. These objectives along with the previous objectives mentioned with the mission statement have been set in regards to increasing student satisfaction and maximizing the resources of the Recreational Services Department:

- Participation and growth of intramural sports
- Knowledge and awareness of potential participants regarding the Intramural Sports program
- The care and expansion of the equipment used by the program
- A survey that can be given to participating students to determine satisfaction with current state

### **Literature Review**

The opportunity of intramural sports participation should not be deprived of any student or faculty member at Missouri Southern State University because of the benefits that the program contains (Means, 1963). Means writes that intramural sports “may contribute more than we can ever know to a long, happy and normal life.” The importance of student activities including recreational activities, clubs, and intramural sports has shown itself in many studies. Colleges and universities are striving to increase graduation rates, student satisfaction, and the amount of graduating students with adequate skills to be successful in the workforce (Parkinson, 2013). Students who are more involved on campus are likely to be more satisfied with the university as well as being more likely to stay at the school (Moffitt, 2010). Because of this importance in involvement on campus, intramural sports programs around the country thrive with the support of their respective universities behind them. Missouri Southern State University has made it clear

that the school wants the intramural sports program to grow with the purchase of the new Beimdiek Recreation Center and continued purchases of new equipment for the department.

At Missouri Southern State University, the recreation department is responsible for several areas including fitness, wellness, intramural sports, and aquatics. According to a study done by Robert Lindsey and Eugene Sessoms (2006), colleges and universities across the nation are beginning to understand the importance that recreational sports have on retention, recruitment, and the satisfaction of students. In their study they used a modified version of the National Intramural-Recreational Sport Association's Quality and Importance of Recreational Services Survey. The questionnaire contained questions about classification, ethnicity, gender, grade point average, employment status, and various questions about retention. Lindsey and Sessoms found that 69.3% of students said "the availability of recreational sports was at least somewhat important in deciding to attend the college." The participants used in this study were taken from physical education and health classes. This is a cause of concern as far as the validity of the project. The participants used in this study do not accurately represent all students at the university. It is in the best interest of the project to widen the participants to all fields so it better represents the population of the university as a whole. This is important when drawing a sample so that your data is more valid and reliable. Another flaw in Lindsey and Sessoms' study was the scale used in answering questions. The answers provided to the participants were: not important, somewhat important, important, and very important. It is imperative for the study to use a balanced scale when posing these questions so that you do not influence or lean one way when surveying the participants. For example, the questions should refrain from using different levels of importance because the participant will already have the word "important" in their mind. For

this reason, the Likert Scale is the best scale for survey questions because the answers range from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

In a study completed by Jill Moffitt (2010), there was support that “increased involvement in campus recreation resulted in an increase of satisfaction and sense of belonging to the campus community through participation in campus and academic life.” In this particular study, the College Senior Survey was used. After completing the study, Moffitt recommended that further research in this area should focus on outdoor recreation experiences, aquatic programs, or intramural sports. Also Moffitt suggested that someone duplicate the study, but alter the College Senior Survey so that you can get different initial participants including users and non-users of recreational sports activities. I decided to focus on intramural sports and surveyed users and non-users.

It is important to understand why intramural sports are important to student life as well as to understand the overall benefits that such a program provides. In a study completed by John Miller (2011), “the results indicated that the recreation center was a main factor when choosing universities but also a main reason not to leave the university.” The recreation center also increased student satisfaction, sense of belonging, and responsibility to the university. In this study the potential of bias does exist because the majority of students who participated in the survey also participated in activities offered by the recreation center. This is one of the main reasons I will be sampling students that may or may not be actively involved in intramural sports.

## Student Survey

I am including the survey that I passed out to 140 students across the university. I surveyed a variety of classes and students to assure I would have a good sample. Here is the survey with the number of responses for each question:

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The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the wants and needs of students in regards to the Missouri Southern State University's intramural sports program. This study is completely anonymous and is aimed to benefit students and improve the intramural sports at Missouri Southern. Thank you for your participation.

**Please check the box which is most applicable to you.**

1. Classification: **13** Freshmen    **31** Sophomore    **62** Junior    **34** Senior    **0** Graduate
2. Ethnicity: **5** Asian American/Pacific Islander    **7** African American    **6** Hispanic    **115** Caucasian  
**7** Other \_\_\_\_\_
3. Gender: **60** Male    **80** Female
4. Age: **113** 23 years old or under    **27** 24 years old or older
5. Type of accommodation: **23** Residence Hall    **2** Fraternity House    **115** Other \_\_\_\_\_
6. If you commute to campus, what is your average driving time?  
**42** under 10 minutes    **43** 10-19 minutes    **12** 20-29 minutes    **9** 30-39 minutes    **9** 40 minutes or more
7. Are you a member of a fraternity or sorority? **8** Yes    **132** No
8. Are you currently employed? **108** Yes    **32** No , if Yes: **16** On campus    **89** Off campus
9. Are you aware of the intramural sports program at Missouri Southern State University? **107** Yes    **33** No
10. Are you aware that participation in intramural sports is absolutely free to all students? **98** Yes    **42** No
11. Have you participated in intramural sports this semester (Spring 2014) or last semester (fall 2013)?  
**26** Yes    **114** No If No, why? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Are you aware of the Facebook page, "MSSU Intramurals?" **69** Yes    **71** No
13. Are you currently friends with intramural sports on Facebook? **42** Yes    **98** No

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14. Are you aware of the twitter page, "@MSSUIntramural?" **31** Yes **109** No
15. Are you currently following intramural sports on Twitter? **13** Yes **127** No
16. Would you sign up for e-mail newsletters regarding intramural sports? **38** Yes **102** No
17. Would you sign up for text updates regarding sign-up deadlines for intramural sports? **42** Yes **98** No
18. From Monday through Thursday, are you available to play intramural sports in the evening from 5-10 p.m.? **53** Yes **87** No
19. From Monday through Thursday, are you available to play intramural sports in the afternoon from 1-5 p.m.? **24** Yes **116** No
20. Would you participate in weekend intramural sports? **57** Yes **83** No
21. Would you attend intramural sports events on campus as a spectator if there were more seating? **61** Yes **79** No
- 22. Facebook is a good way for intramural sports to communicate with students.**
- 1** Strongly Disagree **1** Disagree **13** Neither disagree or agree **70** Agree **55** Strongly Agree
- 23. Twitter is a good way for intramural sports to communicate with students.**
- 2** Strongly Disagree **3** Disagree **23** Neither disagree or agree **68** Agree **44** Strongly Agree
- 24. It is important for me to have a photographer at intramural sports events.**
- 8** Strongly Disagree **11** Disagree **73** Neither disagree or agree **37** Agree **11** Strongly Agree
- 25. Being able to play competitively in intramural sports is important to me.**
- 16** Strongly Disagree **18** Disagree **50** Neither disagree or agree **44** Agree **12** Strongly Agree
- 26. Being able to play for fun without being very competitive is important to me.**
- 4** Strongly Disagree **16** Disagree **56** Neither disagree or agree **47** Agree **17** Strongly Agree
- 27. The social bonding that takes place during intramural sports has been essential in creating my network of friends.**
- 17** Strongly Disagree **11** Disagree **59** Neither disagree or agree **40** Agree **13** Strongly Agree
28. When is the ideal time for your participation in intramural sports? \_\_\_\_\_
29. If you have participated in intramural sports:

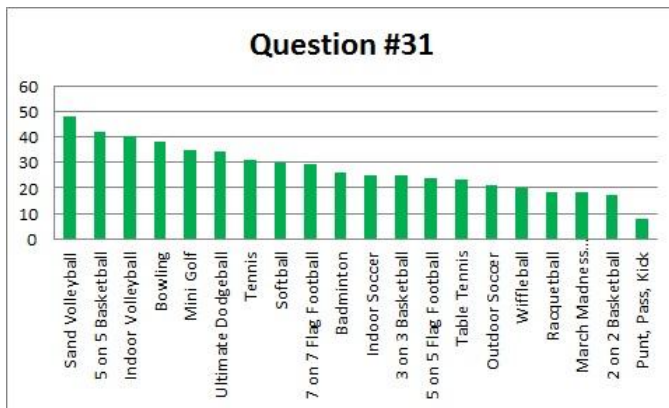
The Missouri Southern Intramural Sports Program has increased my overall satisfaction with the university.

0 Strongly Disagree    3 Disagree    22 Neither disagree or agree    20 Agree    11 Strongly Agree

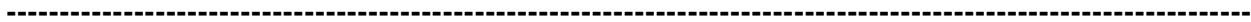
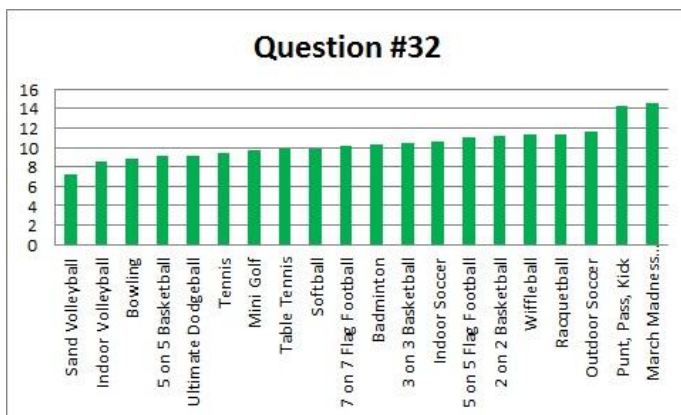
30. How do you become aware of deadlines to sign up for intramural sports?

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The 31<sup>st</sup> question on the survey asked the students “Which of the following intramural sports would you like to participate in?” Here is a graph showing the students’ responses to that question.



Lastly, the 32<sup>nd</sup> question asked the students to rank the sports with 1 being their favorite and 20 being their least favorite. Here is a graph showing the average rank.



## **Services Strategy**

The intramural sports program strives to provide a safe environment that fosters sportsmanship and maximum participation. Primarily the services provided consist of the intramural sports that are offered to students as well as faculty and staff of Missouri Southern. It is important for the intramural sports program to remain fair and impartial in all of the sports offered. For this reason, each sport is equally available for both men and women. Here is a list of the sports currently offered and what I plan to propose the intramural sports department to do with each sport in the future. I will be using a lot of the data obtained in a survey conducted of 140 students to support plans for each individual sport offered.

**Sand Volleyball:** Sand volleyball has been a favorite of many intramural sports participants for years. It is easily one of the top two coed intramural sports offered at Missouri Southern State University. When students of Missouri Southern were asked to rank the sports with 1 being the best and 20 the worst, sand volleyball was the highest ranked mean, median, and mode. Sand volleyball has benefited greatly from the addition of a second court because twice as many games can be played in the same amount of time. I have proposed a shorter season for sand volleyball because of this addition. It's safe to say sand volleyball is not going anywhere since it is the most popular and is one of the cheaper and easier sports to host.

**Seven on Seven Flag Football:** Flag football was in the middle of the pack when students ranked the sports with its median being a 9 on a scale of 1-20 with 1 being your favorite. However, I should point out that flag football is a favorite amongst male college students and only 38% of students surveyed were male. Flag football requires the use of spray paint, flags, and footballs. It is not utterly difficult to host and it is in the program's best interest to continue to support this sport.

**Ultimate Dodge ball:** Dodge ball is a game that college students have played since grade school. It ranked surprisingly high with the fifth best average in the ranking. I say it's surprising because of the lack of participation in recent years. I plan to propose a change in the set up so where students can form their own teams prior to the tournament. With this small change, I hope to attract more students with the promise they will get to play with their friends.

**Two on Two Basketball:** Two on two basketball serves as a primer for the program's more extensive five on five basketball league. The event did rank low in the student's ranking, but the ease of running the event sticks out. The program already has the necessary equipment so this sport should continue on for years.

**Indoor Volleyball:** The two volleyball events that the Intramural Sports program puts on were the two favorites in the ranking. As previously mentioned about basketball, the program has also necessary equipment to host this event and with the overwhelming popularity, there is a no brainer to continue hosting this event. One change the management team could consider in the future is extending this event to two courts which allows the league to double the games in the same amount of time.

**Indoor Soccer:** Indoor soccer is a unique sport to Missouri Southern State University. When the new Beimdiek Recreation Center was built, the program was blessed with enough space to host this sport. This sport has been stressful for the management team as well as other people across campus because of the danger of messing up the new Recreation Center. However, safety precautions have evolved with this sport. Because of this sports' popularity, especially among foreign exchange students, I believe that it should continue. It is important for the management team and Recreation Center staff to make sure that proper safety precautions are met before this sport is played.

**Punt, Pass, Kick:** This event was far from a student favorite in the survey and actually ranked second to last in the ranking. However, this event is a fun event to involve students that do not ordinarily participate in intramural sports. Since this event is hosted on the oval of the campus, it helps the visibility of the Intramural Sports program. It's easy to run and gets the campus ready for the big game on Homecoming.

**Racquetball:** This sport has really had poor participation the past couple of years, but that is partly because the marketing of it has been subpar. It ranked low on the ranking, but with the only cost consisting of one person from the management team running the event; it is worth continuing to host.

**Table Tennis:** Table tennis was popular in the student ranking with an average of 9.8. I am proposing to move this event to the weekend in hopes of getting more participation. It is another simple event to host and helps the program become more visible in the dorms where the event is hosted.

**Wiffleball:** A lot of schools do not have the luxury of having this event inside. At Missouri Southern, the Intramural Sports program is able to host this event as one of the last sports of the fall semester. With its huge spike in participation the last couple of years, I plan on extending the league a few more days to allow teams to play more.

**Badminton:** Badminton was in the middle of the pack on the ranking. In the future, I recommend the program to host this event in the Robert Ellis Young Gymnasium. By doing so, the equipment can stay in the same building and it becomes easier for all parties involved.

**Three on Three Basketball:** This event serves as the second primer for five on five basketball. With that being said, this event is still big and keeps on growing. With the equipment already being in place, this event is crucial to have as five on five basketball benefits greatly from it.

**Bowling:** Bowling ranked as the third favorite for students amongst the intramural sports. I suggest that the management team make contact early with the local bowling alley. By doing so, the program can determine the best day to host the event as well as getting a good price. This is an event that could be tested on the weekend in the future.

**5 on 5 Basketball:** This is by far the biggest event that the Intramural Sports program hosts. With close to twenty teams participating each year with rosters from five to twenty players there is never more people actively involved with the program. However, this sport is also very expensive for the program. Out of all of the sports, basketball requires the most student workers. The program commonly has ten people working on an average night. I propose for the program to narrow this down to eight people. There should be two scorekeepers and two refs on each court at all times. One of the four people working should be a supervisor for each court. This small change will not hurt the flow of the program enough to justify not saving over a thousand dollars.

**5 on 5 Flag Football:** This flag football league is considered a passing league. This opens flag football up for people that like the more relaxed, backyard feel to a game. With the equipment already being used, there is no reason to remove this event.

**Softball:** Softball has been one of the more expensive sports because the program must go off campus to play. Renting out fields can be expensive for the program, but the interest in the sport makes it very difficult to remove softball. Coed softball involves the second highest amount of people out of all of the sports. I strongly recommend the university to explore some options on a field that the program can use. At this moment, I have determined that it is in the best interest of the program to keep this sport afloat while it tries to find a place to call its home.

**Tennis:** Tennis was offered for the first time in the Spring of 2014 for the first time in five years. The students expressed their interest in this sport so I decided that the program should host tennis on a nice spring Saturday in April next year.

**Outdoor Soccer:** Outdoor soccer ranked really low on the students' rankings. I have scheduled it for next spring but just for a few days. The goals that the program owns have been falling apart for years, and the participation is low. Unless something changes within the next two years, I would recommend the program to stop hosting intramural soccer. Offering soccer to students is not worth the cost of brand new goals at this point as the goals are thousands of dollars. If the program can use the goals that McCauley High School or the girls soccer team uses, then I recommend that the program stay pat.

**Miniature Golf:** This event is so simple and popular that there is no way for the program to change anything. But just like the bowling alley, it is always important for the program to determine details ahead of time to make sure the school saves costs.

**March Madness Bracket Challenge:** With participation doubling twice in the last two years, this event is as big as ever. The Intramural Sports program uses this event as its biggest promotion across campus as the program gives a brand new high definition television to the winner. This small cost drastically helps the visibility of the program, and I believe is worth the cost.

**Fall 2014 Schedule**

<b>Fall 2014 Intramural Sports Schedule</b>										
Players	Sport	Type	Deadline	Time	Meeting	Days	Start	Finish	# days	# Game Slots
4v4	Sand Volleyball	Coed, Men, Women	22-Aug	5-10	25-Aug	TR	26-Aug	11-Sep	6	120
7v7	Flag Football	Men, Women	29-Aug	2-6	2-Sep	MW	3-Sep	8-Oct	11	44
5v5	Dodgeball Tournament	Men, Women	9-Sep	5:00		Sat.	13-Sep	13-Sep	1	
6v6	Indoor Volleyball	Coed, Men, Women	19-Sep	5-10	22-Sep	TR	23-Sep	23-Oct	11	110
2v2	Basketball Tournament*	Coed, Men, Women	20-Sep	2:00		Sat.	20-Sep	20-Sep	1	
1	Punt, Pass, Kick*	Men, Women	29-Sep	11-2		M	29-Sep	29-Sep	1	
6v6	Indoor Soccer	Coed, Men, Women	10-Oct	2-6	16-Oct	MW	20-Oct	19-Nov	10	40
1	Racquetball*	Men, Women	1-Nov	6:00		Sat.	1-Nov	1-Nov	1	
1	Table Tennis*	Men, Women	8-Nov	6:00		Sat.	8-Nov	8-Nov	1	
7v7	Wiffleball	Mixed	24-Oct	5-10	27-Oct	TR	28-Oct	20-Nov	8	40
2v2	Badminton*	Coed, Men, Women	2-Dec	6:00		T	2-Dec	2-Dec	1	
3v3	Basketball Tournament*	Men, Women	4-Dec	6:00		R	4-Dec	4-Dec	1	

This is the schedule that I propose for the Intramural Sports program to implement for the fall semester of 2014 at Missouri Southern. This schedule utilizes the research that has been completed when determining several different events. For example, I believe the program should shorten the season of sand volleyball. With the addition of a second court in 2012, this creates an opportunity for twice as many games to be played in the same amount of time. I do not believe the program needs twice as many games as evidenced in the past when teams were happy playing 6-10 games in a season. With that being said, I have shortened the season so where sand volleyball will be completed by Thursday, September 11<sup>th</sup>. Keep in mind that this is creating more time available for other sports.

With the increasing interest of intramural sports on the weekends, I believe the Intramural Sports program should implement this new schedule so four different one day events can be held on the weekend. These four events include a dodge ball tournament, two on two basketball tournament, racquetball, and table tennis. In this testing stage of weekend intramural sports, it is important for the new management team to measure the participation and decide whether it is

good business to continue to do these sports on the weekend. By expanding to the weekend, the Intramural Sports schedule was able to use the other four weekdays for other sports. Because of the four days becoming available, the schedule is able to double the amount of game slots for whiffle ball. This was becoming a growing concern for the program as participation in this sport in the fall semester of 2013 was 300% of the participation in the fall semester of 2010. By expanding the amount of time for the sport to be played, the program will be able to increase participant satisfaction and assure each team will get to play more games. Each sport that is listed in this schedule has been played in the past. Based on the survey, there is enough interest in each of these individual sports to rationalize the existence. The least popular sport determined by the survey was the Punt, Pass, Kick competition. The little interest in this may be because of the survey participants' unknowing of the nature of the event. This event has been held on the week of Homecoming in the fall for the last 6 years at least. This is a good opportunity for the Intramural Sports program to get some exposure across campus while also providing something fun for students on one of the more exciting weeks in the fall semester.

### Spring 2015 Schedule

<b>Spring 2015 Intramural Sports Schedule</b>										
Players	Sport	Type	Deadline	Time	Meeting	Days	Start	Finish	# Days	# Game Slots
1	Ultimate Dodgeball*	Mixed	21-Jan	6:00		W	1/21	1/21	1	
1	Bowling*	Men, Women	22-Jan	6:00		R	1/22	1/22	1	
5v5	Basketball	Men, Women	28-Jan	4-9	30-Jan	MTWR	2/2	3/12	24	240
5v5	Flag Football	Men, Women	6-Mar	2-6	12-Mar	MW	3/25	4/15	7	28
10v10	Softball	Coed	6-Mar	5-10	12-Mar	TR	3/24	4/28	11	55
1	March Madness Bracket Challenge*	Mixed	18-Mar	N/A		N/A	3/18	3/20	1	
1	Tennis Tournament*	Men, Women	4-Apr	2:00		Sat.	4/4	4/4	1	
7v7	Soccer	Mixed	12-Apr	2-6	16-Apr	MW	4/20	4/29	4	24
2v2	Sand Volleyball	Coed, Men, Women	25-Apr	2:00		Sat.	4/25	4/25	1	
1	Miniature Golf*	Men, Women	30-Apr	6:00		R	4/30	4/30	1	

This is the schedule that I believe the Missouri Southern Intramural Sports program should use for the spring semester of 2015. The first week back for students has never been a popular time to participate in intramural sports so I have decided not to waste any resources for the first week of classes. Instead, I believe the program should use those resources for the upcoming sports including five on five basketball. This is the biggest sport that the Missouri Southern Intramural Sports Program hosts based on participation and spectator involvement. It is also the longest sport because it lasts six weeks. There are several factors that go into this decision when determining how long this sport will last. First of all, from January through Spring Break at Missouri Southern there is a rarely a day that students feel comfortable competing in sports outside. On occasion the week before Spring Break there is good weather, but it is not in the best interest of the participants to start a sport and then follow with a twelve day gap before the next time games are played. But because of the popularity of five on five basketball, it works out great being able to extend the sport to six weeks.

Softball continues to be the program's biggest coed sport in overall participation. For this reason, I have scheduled softball to last a couple days longer this year to assure that each team gets a fair amount of games. The saying "April showers bring May flowers" has been accurate the past couple of years. When determining a schedule for softball, it is important to remember that there will likely be a couple days rained out. With that in mind, it is safe to reserve the field for more days than you actually need. I have suggested that the program should also include a few weekend events in the spring. Once again, it is important to determine how successful these events are when it comes time to make a management decision on whether to continue weekend intramural sports. The tennis and sand volleyball tournaments are the two events that I have scheduled on Saturday's. I chose these sports because they are both one day events that are held

outside. This gives the participants to get outside on the weekend and enjoy the weather while participating in these sports.

### **Business Differentiation**

Product differentiation for the Intramural Sports program at Missouri Southern is completely existent. It is very difficult to find leagues around the area for sand volleyball, or a table tennis tournament. There are several different sports that are offered that are simply nonexistent in the area. Students continue to be funneled to the program because there is nowhere else that these events can take place.

Students of Missouri Southern determine which recreational activities they are going to participate in based on a variety of reasons. It's of the utmost importance for the Intramural Sports program to offer a service that differentiates itself from its competitors. The Intramural Sports program has an enormous advantage over its competitors in price. With the program being absolutely free, there are few services in the area that can even come close. There have been soccer leagues that have cost teams \$360 and basketball leagues that have cost teams \$300. Money remains important to everyone, especially college students. With that in mind, students are much more likely to participate in intramural sports unless the competitors are offering something unique. Because of this, it remains important for the management team to be aware of students' interest and what other events are occurring locally. And most importantly, it should be a goal of the management team to continue to raise the awareness to students that intramural sports are absolutely free. I think a realistic goal for the program is to increase the awareness by ten percent each year as it is currently at 70%. It is realistic for 100% of students to know that intramural sports are absolutely free and the management team should strive to make this happen.

The management team and student workers have helped differentiate the program from other competitors. The program must continue to utilize these employees' expertise, responsiveness, courtesy, reliability, trustworthiness, and communication. If the program can continue to excel in these areas, then participants will continue to notice the difference and be happier participating in intramural sports at Missouri Southern.

The program continues to strive for excellence and the management team needs to have this as a focus moving forward. The image of the Intramural Sports program is as strong as ever. The Facebook and Twitter accounts have been professional and informing to students. These pages have been user friendly and encouraged student interaction. When dealing with problems within the program, the management team has been professional and understanding. The equipment being used by the program is of good quality, and sports are being held with care. The management team must strive every day to continue presenting a good image to all participants and future participants.

### **Management/Supervisor Team**

Successful businesses have super heroes that are making them succeed. Knowing this information, investors look primarily at the management plan and financials when determining whether to invest in the company or not. Although the Intramural Sports program at Missouri Southern is not looking for an investment, it is absolutely necessary to understand the super heroes that make this program run. At Missouri Southern, the Intramural Sports program is ran primarily by students. The students are allowed to work a maximum of twenty hours a week while the majority of workers are being paid minimum wage. With the intramural sports jobs mainly being seasonal it is hard to attract the best help because of the inability to consistently give hours to students or match hourly wages. However, the intramural sports program has had

better success recruiting a management team because of the consistency and the compensation is higher at \$8.50 an hour. With that being said, there are many students who could make more money if they worked elsewhere. So it is important for the intramural sports program to offer as many benefits as possible outside of these requirements.

Some of the benefits that Missouri Southern Intramural Sports Student Help workers have are the environment, flexibility, and ease of job. The environment that is provided to the student help is essential in creating a positive place to work. It is important for the management team to have fun with the staff and provide a reliable source for all things intramurals. The job is easy to perform for the most part. It is relaxed, students get to be around other students, and a lot of the job is watching people play sports. However, there are problems that can arise that can make the staff unhappy. Participants complaining to the student workers, cancellations of shifts, and other worries of the job can be easily fixed by the management team. To continue to make the minimum wage student workers jobs fun and worth doing it is absolutely necessary for the management team to step in before any problems escalate. If a participant is unhappy whether because of a "bad" call or there is a fight to break out, the management team should step in and find a solution to the problem. Another major concern is that the student workers cannot get consistent hours and they are looking for other jobs. The management team should accept that this will happen and offer more flexibility to the workers to assure that he or she can continue to work both jobs. If this cannot be done, then it is likely that the student workers will leave the more inconsistent job at Missouri Southern. If the management team continues to make the jobs of the student workers fun, easy and flexible, then there will always be students who want to work for the Missouri Southern Intramural Sports program.

The management and supervisor team consists of:

- Gary Montgomery, junior, has three years of experience working within the Missouri Southern State University's Intramural Sports program. His previous experience includes coordinating and supervising sports, scorekeeping, and refereeing. He is actively involved on campus and is a member of the Kappa Alpha fraternity. He uses his outgoing nature and love for sports to promote the program and he specializes in dealings with fraternities and sororities on campus. He has a history of leadership positions in different clubs growing up, and his experience at the Boys and Girls Club will help him excel as a member of the management team.
- Brock Compton, sophomore, has two years of experience working within the program. He is a natural born leader and is personable with all participants. His previous work at Camp Galilee as a Camp Counselor and Scheduler have played an important role in scheduling sports and understanding how to handle a variety of situations. With a strong background in sports including umpiring baseball for six years, he is a tremendous asset to the program.
- Emily Burchett, sophomore, has two years of experience working within the Intramural Sports program. She has demonstrated a passion for all sports as she aspires to be a personal trainer in the future. She has used her experience as a student trainer at Missouri Southern to help out the Intramural Sports program. Because of the importance of safety, it is great to have her at events when accidents do occur. Her organization and reliability have proved to be a major asset the last two years. She, too, has had previous experience as a referee and umpire before coming to Missouri Southern.

This management team is considered strong because of its capability of securing the resources needed to make the program a success, and because of the diversity of the talent makes the team stronger than an individual Intramural Coordinator. The combination of these three employees will prove to be a major asset of the program over the next few years as they lead the program and inspire future students.

The management team moving forward will have different mentors that will be available to help if there is ever a question or need in the future. Another thing the intramural sports program should implement is the availability to sign up to be a mentor when they are no longer working for the program. The current mentors are:

- Steven Benfield, Recreational Services Director, has served this role at Missouri Southern State University for the past three years. His willingness to answer calls on his time off and provide flexibility to the program has been a major asset. He will continue to be a mentor for all future employees in the Intramural Sports program. He has made it a priority to provide the resources for the intramural referees to push the limits and help grow themselves.
- Jansen Adams, Intramural Coordinator and Supervisor (2010-2014), has a long history of being around sports. Through various leadership roles in activities, clubs, and sports in high school he has been able to transfer his skills to the Intramural Sports program. He remains just a phone call away in the future as the program continues to grow.

## **Management Plan**

### **Recruiting/Hiring Process**

The Missouri Southern State University Intramural Sports program has used a variety of ways to recruit in the past with the primary way being word-of-mouth. I suggest for the program to expand their recruiting process so the program can attract better candidates. The program should use the career fair as well as Hire a Lion to help expand the search. Flyers posted in buildings or on Facebook can also help attract more qualified applicants. Officials will never please everyone, but the more people the officials please the more satisfied the participants are with intramural sports. The hiring process will begin with the management team by selecting applicants that he or she feels will be the best at the job. This person will then go through a more formal interview with the Recreational Services Director, Steven Benfield. If the applicant seems like a good fit, then the next step is to set up a meeting with the Student Employment Coordinator, Tonya Nickle. Tonya Nickle will then help the student officially get on payroll as they finish his or her quest to become a Missouri Southern Intramural Sports program employee.

### **Eligibility of participants**

Participants must be currently students, faculty, or staff members and must have a valid MSSU ID card. In the past, the Intramural Sports program has failed to check students for MSSU ID cards and I propose that the program begins doing this again. By forcing the participants to follow this simple task, the program will be able to avoid ineligible players participating. All participants must be on a team's official roster and can only play on one team per sport. The only exception to this is if the participant is on a coed team and wishes to participate in a men's or women's sport.

There are several rules in place regarding the participation of varsity, professional or former athletes:

1. A member of a varsity team or anyone attempting to become a varsity member is ineligible for Intramural Sports participation in their specific or related sports.
2. Students receiving a varsity scholarship are not eligible for the sport in which they hold the scholarship. Athletes who lose their scholarship and have never lettered are eligible to participate in Intramural Sports in the given sport one year after the loss of their scholarship, with the year being June to June.
3. A varsity letter winner at MSSU or any other college or university will not be eligible to participate in the sport in which they earned their varsity letter until completion of a one-year non-participation period, with the year being June to June.
4. Junior college transfers who have received a varsity letter in a particular sport will not be eligible to participate for one year following such competition, with the year being June to June.
5. Students who have established themselves as professionals in any sport(s) will not be eligible to participate in the sport(s) in which they forfeited their amateur status. All students, faculty, and staff upon completion of their professional sports career, must wait two years before being considered for Intramural Sports participation. It is the responsibility of the individual athlete to inform the intramural sports program of his or her status.

There have been special cases in the past where these rules have been altered. For example, a varsity basketball player that practiced with the team and never played a game quit the basketball team. Upon quitting the basketball team he was no longer receiving a scholarship from the university and wanted to be eligible to play intramural basketball. The management team reviewed the situation and decided to let him play. I think in the future the Intramural Sports program should alter some of the eligibility rules to help with some of these situations. When a varsity athlete quits the sport he or she is participating in he or she becomes a regular student at the university. Sometimes these athletes will continue to get the scholarship they earned through the semester in which they quit. This is difficult for the Intramural Sports program to monitor, so that is why I propose that these former athletes only have to sit out a semester before participating in intramural sports.

### **Dealing with Problems**

When dealing with college students playing competitively in sports, problems are likely to occur. Whether it is an injury or a heated argument, these problems are the nature of the beast. An effective management team can defuse problems and find solutions. When dealing with injuries, the management team must always act fast and act smart. The program needs to make sure that an AED is available at each event as well as a stocked first aid kit. The failure of having these supplies on hand is simply asking for trouble. The Intramural Sports program's management team is all CPR and first aid certified, and a majority of the student workers are certified as well. When an injury occurs, the common protocol is to assess the situation and determine the severity. If it is a severe injury, then an ambulance will be called and the management team will provide care to the injured participant until the ambulance arrives. If it is non-severe, then the management team will provide first aid to the best of their abilities and then

fill out an accident report. If a student is currently working for Missouri Southern, then he or she cannot transport the participant to the hospital. In this situation friends will normally volunteer to provide transportation, but it is always necessary to offer to call for an ambulance for the participant.

In other problems that may occur such as heated arguments or fights, it is up to the management team to step in and help defuse the problem. The student workers do have the authority to remove participants from play if they deem necessary, but ultimately the management team wants to step in and control the situation. If a participant must be ejected or removed from an event, then he or she must meet with the Recreational Services Director, Steven Benfield, before participating in intramural sports again. If the participant will not leave the event, then campus police can be called by the management team to help escort him or her away. And although it may be obvious, but if there is a fight, then other students will likely break up the fight and campus police can be called. Each problem will be dealt with on a case to case basis, and that decision is ultimately up to the Recreational Services Director.

### **Intramural Sports Positions**

The following positions are available through intramural sports:

- Scorekeepers – Responsible for signing teams in on the score sheet, verifying participant identification, tracking the game score, and timing games. Specific duties will vary by sport.
- Sports Officials – Responsible for officiating Intramural Sports. Sports officials are trained through a series of clinics and meetings.

- Student Supervisor – Responsible for employee supervision and general game site/event management for Intramural Sports activities and special events.

### **Marketing Strategy**

Traditional students can be defined as students 23 years or younger, and non-traditional students are 24 years and older. For the Intramural Sports program at Missouri Southern, the target market consists of traditional male students based on the survey that I handed out. Following the 80/20 rule of marketing where 80 percent of a company's sales revenue comes from 20 percent of its customers it is likely that 80 percent of intramural sports participation comes from 20 percent of the people participating. So the final target market for the Intramural Sports program is traditional male students who have participated in intramural sports at Missouri Southern before.

However, it is still important to attract new participants and the program aspires to grow. The old saying of nine out of ten customers will tell their friends if they had a bad experience, and only one out of ten will tell their friends if they had a good experience still has meaning. Many students hear about intramural sports through word of mouth. It is essential for the Intramural Sports program to make sure that students are speaking positive about the program. The product strategy traditionally falls under marketing strategy. I outlined what sports will be played and at what times in my proposed schedules for the next two semesters.

### **Risk Analysis**

One of the most imperative goals of the Intramural Sports program is for students to be aware of its existence. E-mails to all students and talking to classes will drastically improve the program's current numbers in this area. The management team should continue to work with people on campus to help spread the word about the program. Even with the popularity of the

program's Facebook page, there was still over half of the students surveyed who had not heard of the page. There is an obvious room for growth, but there remains a risk to the program of students simply not wanting to participate. The goal is to reach every student that would embrace the opportunity of participating in intramural sports.

There have been several problems and complaints from students in the past about the website that the program uses for teams to sign up. The website is commonly known as IMLeagues and is used by hundreds of universities across the nation. The website is a great place for the sports, captains, and for information. However, the use of the website is very low amongst students. It would be beneficial to use the website more in the future. It gives the management team the ability to schedule, post standings, and acquire information about teams all in one place. I suggest the program handout flyers, and post instructions on how to use the website as the program continues to grow.

In the past, the Intramural Coordinator has given out his phone number on schedules for students to access. The management team needs to be easily accessible, but I believe it is up to each individual on whether he or she wants to give their phone number out. It has its benefits because students can get instant answers for just about any question, but sometimes the coordinator gets texts and calls at odd hours of the day. Regardless, the management team can use the Twitter and Facebook page actively to make sure that the program is easily accessible and students' questions are being answered.

One more risk that is floating around is the need of participants to sign up on IMLeagues. I suggest that the program embraces the website and uses it more frequently. However, if the program decides to cut its ties with IMLeagues, then it would be a smart move to offer multiple ways to sign up for sports. People enjoy choices, and the program could offer signups through

text messages, e-mails, Facebook messages, pen and paper, and even more ways. Whichever the management team chooses, it is important to continue to keep captains informed.

### **Competitor Analysis**

The direct competitors of the Missouri Southern Intramural Sports program are local sports leagues. The local sports leagues offer the same service as the Intramural Sports program, but at a much higher cost. I view this as a distinct advantage of the Intramural Sports program, but it is worth thinking about. It is possible that potential participants see intramural sports are free and perceive low quality. If Missouri Southern charged for intramural sports like other big universities, then people would likely perceive higher quality and take the program more seriously. However, the program would lose participants because of the cost. I do not think it would be good for the program to implement a cost and instead the program should use this as an advantage.

Some examples of indirect competitors are other activities on campus, jobs, school work. These competitors can take up the time of potential participants so where he or she does not have time to participate in intramural sports. There are students who distinctively do not want to play because of their lack of sports love, but that cannot really be considered a competitor. It is difficult to compete with jobs. Students are not likely to quit a job so they can participate in intramural sports. The best the Intramural Sports program can do is work around the job schedules. Because of this, there will be more events hosted at night and the program is experimenting with weekend events. School work can be a competitor, but for most college students they are willing to put down the book for a little bit to get the social experience of playing intramural sports with their friends. But the biggest competitor may be the university itself. Other activities across campus can take up the time of a lot of students. Various clubs,

musical shows, and student activities are almost constantly occurring somewhere on campus. It would be a great benefit to the Intramural Sports program if they can partner with some of these clubs and Student Activities to combine the participation.

### **Growth**

I suggest the Intramural Sports program implement retention reactivation in the future. I believe that the program should begin tracking students better. The program already enters student information into team rosters so it would not be much more effort to begin compiling a database of former participants of sports. Within this database, students can opt in to receiving e-mail newsletters from the Intramural Sports program as well as supplying their phone number to receive text updates. There was an overwhelming amount of students surveyed that said "Yes" they would opt in to receive e-mail newsletters and text updates regarding intramural sports. With basically one third of the students surveyed wanting these two features, it is important for the program to understand the consumers' wants. In addition to e-mails and text messages, the former participants can expect a "friend add" on Facebook. Since Facebook is used as the primary source for promoting and marketing the Missouri Southern Intramural Sports program, it would benefit the program greatly to grow the amount of students viewing the information. Even with this in mind, the participants will benefit from being on Facebook as there will likely be pictures of themselves and important information regarding sports he or she cares about.

I have learned from the students, and there are a variety of reasons that motivates them to participate in intramural sports. The number one reason for people participating is to be around their friends. People in college care about their social life, and students like to follow their friends around. This is why word-of-mouth will continue to be one of the best ways for the program to market its sports. Another motivator is previous sports involvement. Former athletes

love intramural sports because it gives them the opportunity to continue doing what they love when they have been told or decided that they cannot do it anymore. Some students have said that they simply have free time so they may as well participate. And sometimes, it gives people the opportunity to play a sport that they never played in the past. If the Intramural Sports program can continue to focus on these motivating factors, then it will help the program continue to grow.

### **Pricing Strategy**

Sometimes it is the little things to make people happy. Participation in intramural sports is absolutely free, and although a good chunk of students surveyed did not know this, they are also equivocally paying for their participation through enrollment in the university. There are a variety of little things that can be done by the program to make students happier with intramural sports. One of the things that the program has offered in the past is a photographer at the majority of the events. I am going to suggest that the program to continue to use a photographer as an added benefit to the students. Based on the survey results, 48 students said they either agree or strongly agree that having a photographer at intramural sports events is important to them opposed to 19 that disagree or strongly disagree. However, among the people that claimed they had participated in intramural sports within the last two semesters none of them replied with disagree or strongly disagree.

Among other little things the program can do is t-shirts for the champions. This has been done in previous years so it expected to continue by students. The program absolutely needs to continue handing out t-shirts to the champions. Other little things that the program supplies participants are the tracking of standings, points per game, and other statistics. This is an added bonus to participating in the intramural sports that the students have loved in the past. The

Intramural Sports program has always believed that if you try the service, then you will want to keep coming back and participating in intramural sports in the future. For this reason, I believe the program should implement prize giveaways to first time participants. The Recreational Services department already purchases promotional giveaways for other events, and I think they should expand it for first time participants. My idea consists of prizes that the participants can actually use depending on the time of the year. Some good ideas are windshield scrapers, water bottles, and flash drives. This is an idea that I believe the program can fit into the budget and will add another benefit to the program.

### **Promotional Strategy**

The promotional mix for the intramural sports program may be the most important aspect. The promotional mix is a blend of non-personal, personal, and special forms for communication techniques aimed at a target market. When determining a target market for the Missouri Southern Intramural Sports program most people would say it's easy. People think that the program should target all students, faculty, and staff. For the program to maximize its resources, it is important to promote to people who have an interest in the program. There are eligible participants who simply do not want to participate. Whether they do not like sports, are not any good, or have interest in other things the intramural sports program should not waste resources on them. The target market of intramural sports mainly consists of students who have participated in the past. With that being said, there is no reason every eligible participant should not be exposed to the program at least once. 33 out of the 140 students surveyed were not even aware of the program's existence, and 42 had no idea that intramural sports participation was absolutely free. If Missouri Southern really wants to support this program, then it will utilize more of its resources to inform students of its existence. A simple e-mail sent to all students

would greatly benefit the program. I propose that a member from the management team or the Recreational Services Director visit every University Experience Class and give a presentation.

This proposed presentation will include a variety of topics:

- What the Intramural Sports program is
- The cost of the Intramural Sports program (absolutely free)
- Upcoming sports
- How to sign up for sports
- What to expect

After these topics are covered, the presenter will show the Facebook and Twitter page to the students. Then, he or she will pass around handouts from the program. I suggest for the program to invest in magnets of the sports schedules I created for the next two semesters. These magnets would be of great use to all students interested in intramural sports. And lastly, the presenter will pass around a sheet giving the students the option to sign up for e-mail newsletters as well as text updates. All of this information will later be put into a database that will allow students to receive more information regarding intramural sports in the future. The magnets would look like this:

### Intramural Sports Fall '14



Players	Sport	Type	Deadline	Days	Time
4v4	<b>Sand Volleyball</b>	Coed, Men, Women	8/22	TR	5-10
7v7	<b>Flag Football</b>	Men, Women	8/29	MW	2-6
5v5	<b>Dodgeball Tourney</b>	Men, Women	9/9	Sat.	5:00
6v6	<b>Indoor Volleyball</b>	Coed, Men, Women	9/19	TR	5-10
2v2	<b>Basketball Tourney*</b>	Coed, Men, Women	9/20	Sat.	2:00
1	<b>Punt, Pass, Kick*</b>	Men, Women	9/29	M	11-2
6v6	<b>Indoor Soccer</b>	Coed, Men, Women	10/10	MW	2-6
7v7	<b>Wiffleball</b>	Mixed	10/24	TR	5-10
1	<b>Racquetball*</b>	Men, Women	11/1	Sat.	6:00
1	<b>Table Tennis*</b>	Men, Women	11/8	Sat.	6:00
2v2	<b>Badminton*</b>	Coed, Men, Women	12/2	T	6:00
3v3	<b>Basketball Tourney*</b>	Men, Women	12/4	R	6:00

\* Indicates sport will be held on day of deadline. Just show up and play!

**Be sure to add MSSU Intramurals on FaceBook!**

Sign up online at [www.IMLeagues.com](http://www.IMLeagues.com)!!!

Along with these presentations as well as text and e-mail updates, the Intramural Sports program should promote the program in other ways as well. There are several cheap ways to expand the visibility of the program. Social media continues to grow each and every day and college students remain some of the biggest users. The Intramural Sports program would be missing out on an easy way to market the program if it did not take advantage of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. In fact, 125 out of the 140 students surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed that Facebook is a good way for intramural sports to communicate with students, and 112 said the same about Twitter. The Intramural Sports program needs to continue to use social media in several different ways. Flyers can be posted on both sites, and on Facebook previous captains can be “tagged” in the photo of the new flyer. This will cause the previous captain to receive a notification, a lot of times straight to their phone, regarding the signup deadline of an upcoming sport. Facebook can also be used to show pictures of intramural sports in action. Sometimes students are nervous to participate in something they know nothing about. This added comfort sometimes pushes students over the edge to participate in the program.

### **Advertising Decision Factors**

Advertising companies must always be organized to maximize the effectiveness. Advertising should be done with regularity for effectiveness and continuity. It is important for companies to find the happy medium of getting the word out to people without overwhelming them. For the Intramural Sports program, advertising should include the introduction of new or upcoming sports, news about the program, and should remain fun to capture the attention of the viewers.

For the Intramural Sports program, advertising will take place in a variety of ways. Social media is huge for the program right now because it is the best way to access a large amount of

students, faculty, and staff. Flyers should also be used for advertising because of the percentage of participants that do not use social media or are not as active as others. The other forms of advertisements the program should use in the future are e-mails and newspapers such as The Chart. All students, faculty, and staff of Missouri Southern will have e-mails so this is the best way to reach the largest number of people.

### **Public Relations Strategy**

For the Intramural Sports program to be able to expose itself to more users free of charge is significant. It would be greatly beneficial to have regular contacts at local TV and Radio Stations as well as The Chart or the Joplin Globe. This is an area where the management team can expand in the future. This added visibility of the program can greatly benefit the student's satisfaction within the program. For example, champions of various sports can have stories about them presented as news in different places. And sometimes if there are big events coming up, the Intramural Sports program can use these contacts to help spread the word across the Missouri Southern Campus as well as Joplin as a whole.

The Intramural Sports program's management team should continue to network and establish relationships with key people. This has been done in the past to a certain extreme, but can continue to grow. The networking of the management team to Intramural Chairs from different fraternities and sororities remains important and ultimately helps promote sports. If the management team can continue contact with previous captains, then the program will continue to grow.

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