

GOLDEN EAGLES ATHLETICS

2020-2021

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Executive Summary

The 2020 – 2021 year was one of the most challenging years for Golden Eagle Athletics as we faced a worldwide pandemic, budget cuts, and managing student athletes in an environment where we had to be socially distanced from them. Add to these challenges, the unprecedented fire season which saw our community engulfed in poor air quality multiple times and the cancellation of outdoor practices, scrimmages, and, on a rare occasion, indoor activities as well. Despite those challenges, the athletic department served the interests of our student athletes, Laramie County Community College (LCCC), and our greater Cheyenne community.

With the support of the LCCC administration; collaboration with Cheyenne Regional Medical Center and our medical partners, our residence hall and dining hall staffs, we were able to provide a safe environment that allowed our student athletes to 1) continue advancing in their degree programs and 2) compete during the 2020 – 2021 academic year.

The coaches adopted a “be flexible and adjust as circumstances arise” perspective. This attitude allowed our student athletes to focus and not be upended by circumstances beyond their control throughout the academic year. From the mindset established by the coaches and the individual programs, we completed all team seasons with only one contest not being completed.

The four pillars of the athletic strategic plan were met. Academic success included a 3.14 cumulative GPA for the department. Competitive success saw all teams finish in the top 4 in their respective divisions; two teams compete at national tournaments and two individuals competed at the National College Finals Rodeo. Campus engagement and community engagement were the most challenging, but LCCC Athletic teams found ways to abide by health protocols while being involved in our college and greater Cheyenne community.

Pillars of Excellence

The Board of Trustees at LCCC is deeply invested in student success, in creating a sense of affinity among our students, and in engaging our broader community. Golden Eagle athletics is one of the primary mechanisms through which this occurs. Yet it requires an understanding of and focus on excellence, combined with a commitment to achieving results. The following four pillars of excellence provide that focus and have been established by LCCC for its athletics programs.

1. Academic Success - LCCC student athletes are students first. Golden Eagles and their teams will excel academically.
2. Competitive Success - LCCC creates winners and we have a championship mindset. Golden Eagles and their teams will excel in competition, on the court, the field, or in the arena.
3. Campus Relationships – Athletics create a sense of affinity and belonging by building relationships across campus. Golden Eagles are seen as leaders in the creation of this environment at LCCC.
4. Community Relationships – Golden Eagles are ambassadors of LCCC in the communities we serve. They demonstrate a sense of service and create a connection between community members and the College.

Academic Success

The Golden Eagle Athletics departments recognizes that student athletes use their athletic talents to work towards and achieve their goal of a college education. Our standard for academic success is multifaceted and includes:

- Team GPA's at 3.0 or higher
- Graduation from LCCC with a degree or a certificate
- Successful transfer to a 4-year institution

Team GPA's and Academic Recognition

Team Totals Fall 2020	
Women's Basketball	3.67
Women's Soccer	3.56
Volleyball	3.20
Men's Basketball	3.13
Women's Rodeo	2.9
Men's Soccer	2.89
Men's Rodeo	2.88
All Teams	3.07

Team Totals Spring 2021	
Women's Basketball	3.39
Women's Soccer	3.54
Volleyball	3.25
Men's Basketball	2.86
Women's Rodeo	3.05
Men's Soccer	3.01
Men's Rodeo	2.71
All Teams	3.14

In addition to the team GPA's, we had 43 student athletes that were recognized at the Region IX level for academic excellence with a cumulative GPA of 3.25 or higher. This included 17 women's soccer players, nine men's soccer players, eight women's basketball players, six volleyball players and three men's basketball players.

The National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) recognizes both team and individual student athletes for their academic success. The Women's Basketball and Women's Soccer teams were recognized as All Academic Teams. We had 22 Golden Eagles recognized as Academic All Americans by the NJCAA. This award is granted to student athletes with cumulative GPA's of 3.60 and higher.

The National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association (NIRA) does not have academic awards for either teams or individual rodeo student athletes.

Graduation and Transfer

The graduating class of 2021 from Laramie County Community College included 36 student athletes who earned 38 credentials. Each of our athletic teams had graduates. 26 sophomores took advantage of the NCAA, NJCAA, and NAIA "wash year" and returned to LCCC.

Along with graduation, we had 19 student athletes who transferred from LCCC to a four-year institution. This included our first ever NCAA Division I transfer of a women's basketball player.

Competitive Success

Golden Eagles Athletics acknowledges that our athletic teams are an extension of the greater college community. We strive to excel in competition on the court, pitch, and arena. Our standards for competitive success are:

- Top 4 Region IX finishes (men's & women's basketball, men's and women's soccer and volleyball) and goal of winning regional championship each year
- Qualifiers for College National Finals Rodeo (Finish in top four of the Central Rocky Mountain Region)
- Transfer to universities to compete
- National tournament appearances
- National rankings
- Competitiveness in competitions—being in position to win match or game

Top 4 Region IX

Men's and women's basketball, men's and women's soccer and volleyball compete in Region IX. For men's and women's basketball and volleyball, Region IX is divided into North and South. Each of our sports met the standard of competitive success. The men's basketball won the north division and hosted the Region IX Men's Basketball Tournament for the first time in program history. The women's basketball team finished 3rd in north division and advanced to the second round of the Region IX Women's Basketball Tournament.

The men's and women's soccer teams won their respective Region IX tournaments.

The volleyball finished 3rd in Region IX north division and advanced to the final day of the Region IX Volleyball tournament.

Qualifiers for the College National Finals Rodeo

Both men's and women's rodeo teams finished in 4th place in the Central Rocky Mountain Region. Two men's rodeo members—Stefan Tonita and Cauy Pokorny—competed at the National College Finals Rodeo in June.

Stefan Tonita competed in bull riding at the College National Finals Rodeo and finished 5th in the country. Cauy Pokorny competed in steer wrestling at the College National Finals Rodeo. While he did not make the short go, it was a great learning opportunity for him to see the next level of competition.

Transfer to Universities to Continue Athletic & Academic Careers

19 Golden Eagle athletes transferred to four year universities to continue their academic and athletic careers. Including the first women's basketball player to transfer to an NCAA Division I institution (UNC-Greensboro). Due to the NCAA, NJCAA, and NAIA declaring the 2020-2021 a "wash year" 26 Golden Eagle sophomore athletes chose to return to LCCC instead of transferring.

National Tournament appearances

The Men's Soccer team competed in the Men's National Soccer Tournament in Wichita, Kansas. The team finished 1 – 1 in pool play. They were a "crossbar and a goal" from advancing into the semifinals.

The Women's Soccer team competed in the Women's National Soccer Tournament in Evans, Georgia. The team finished 1 – 1 in pool play.

National Rankings

The men's and women's soccer teams were nationally ranked throughout the soccer season. The men's team finished the season ranked 20th. The women's team finished the year ranked 6th and in July 2021 was named as one of the top 20 NJCAA Women's Soccer programs in the country by United Soccer Coaches Association.

Campus Engagement

Athletics helps create a sense of belonging by building relationships across campus. We recognize that the building of these relationships is an aware where Golden Eagles Athletics can lead. Our standards for campus engagement are:

- Attend and participate in non-athletic campus events
- Student athlete involvement and leadership in clubs outside of athletics
- Proactive outreach on campus by athletic coaches, staff, and teams to promote engagement in Golden Eagle Athletic events

For the 2020-2021 academic year, this was the most challenging pillar, as the vast majority of our campus was not physically present. Golden Eagle Athletics was committed to serving the campus community. One of the areas Golden Eagles Athletics pursued was developing a partnership with the Western States Bank Food Pantry. In spring 2021, for several of our contests, we did a "virtual food

drive” committing our ticket sales to the Western States Bank Food Pantry. Golden Eagle Athletics presented a check for \$550.00. In early May, the head coaches, athletic director, and sports information manager completed inventory, stocked shelves, and removed expired items from the shelves. We are excited for a return to a better normal where we plan to host food drives at designated home athletic contests. Additionally, the athletic department will volunteer in the food pantry to assist in its running hours to serve our students.

In addition to this work, we had several student athletes who served as Resident Assistants in the residence halls. We had men’s basketball and women’s soccer who served in this capacity.

Finally, as there were few events on campus, our teams did make the most of the opportunities presented to them. The theater department’s outdoor production which occurred in fall semester, was attended by the majority of LCCC athletic teams.

Community Engagement

The fourth, and final, pillar is community engagement. Golden Eagles are ambassadors of LCCC and the communities we serve. Golden Eagles Athletics demonstrate a sense of service and create a connection between community members and the college.

Our standards for this pillar are:

- Involvement in consistent, significant community service activities
- Proactive outreach to the community by athletics staff, coaches, and teams to promote engagement in Golden Eagle athletic events
- Creating opportunities for community members to build relationships with Golden Eagles Athletics’ teams, coaches, and athletes

This was an area that was heavily impacted by COVID protocols. Some opportunities we could not pursue, but moving forward we will continue to build out opportunities to serve our community.

One department wide program that we developed was a pen pal program with Life Care Centers of America. A minimum of two athletes from each team exchanged letters with residents. This was a bit challenging as several of the residents passed away during the exchange process. Working with the recreation director at Life Care, new pen pals were located for each of the student athletes. Moving forward this program is in doubt as the recreation director accepted a position outside of Life Care and a replacement recreation director has not yet been hired.

Despite the challenges of COVID, the majority of teams were able to serve the Cheyenne community in a variety of ways including:

- Women’s Basketball participated in the virtual Girls on the Run program. This is the third year that the women’s basketball program has worked with this program which strives to empower young girls.
- The Men’s Soccer program cleaned the greenway space around the college. Additionally, they worked with the local soccer club and installed the nets for the soccer club’s goals.
- The Women’s Soccer program coached youth soccer teams in the fall. They also assisted with the YWCA Daddy/Daughter dance in spring.

- The Volleyball team continued building out their relationship with the Cheyenne Animal Shelter. This was challenging as the shelter was closed multiple times due to positive COVID cases of employees.

Strategic Priorities

In accordance with the Golden Eagles strategic plan, there are five strategic priorities to guide Golden Eagles Athletics into the future. These priorities are:

1. Develop and implement sport specific strategic and operational plans
2. Increase the community's awareness and engagement in Golden Eagles Athletics
3. Strengthen LCCC Golden Eagles Athletics through private giving
4. Transform LCCC's Athletic facilities
5. Wise exploration of areas for potential expansion of Golden Eagles Athletics offerings

Develop and implement sport specific strategic and operational plans.

During the 2020-2021 academic year, the department worked on strategic plans. In late spring of 2021, the strategic plans were completed. At this time they are being edited and then will be published on the GOLCCC.com website. In each plan, the coaches outline the expectations of their program for each pillar.

This process was challenging as many coaches, while they plan continually for their programs, had not ever been involved with or experienced sport specific strategic planning. It allowed for conversations to occur that assisted coaches in clarifying their vision for their respective programs.

Increase the community's awareness and engagement in Golden Eagles Athletics.

With COVID protocols that included limited spectators at home contests, we had to be somewhat creative in how we engaged the community. In spring of 2020, a full time sports information manager was hired. With this addition to the athletic department our social media became more active. The LCCC athletics Twitter account (@LCCCsports) increased followers and currently has over 1,500 followers. This is the most of any Region IX college.

Additionally, the sports information manager created a YouTube channel, LCCC Golden Eagles, and each home athletic contest is streamed. This channel currently has 314 subscribers. LCCC athletics also has an Instagram account (LCCCsports) and our Facebook page (LCCC Golden Eagle Athletics) was enhanced. Both accounts have over 450 followers.

Another change made was an upgrade to the athletic game programs. They now provide information on Region IX stats, team standings, Golden Eagle Club member recognition, and an overview of the evening's contest. An athlete of the week program was also developed which celebrates the personal athletic accomplishments of student athletes.

A weekly Eagle Sightings is sent out to LCCC college community which provides an update on past week's events and a monthly Blue & Gold e-newsletter is sent out to all Golden Eagle Club members. These tools provide us multiple avenues to communicate with and promote Golden Eagle Athletics.

Strengthen LCCC Golden Eagles Athletics through private giving.

In spring of 2021, collaborating with the LCCC Foundation, a charter was developed and approved for the Golden Eagles Club. This charter is intended to provide much needed structure to the Club and it developed a Board of Directors that assists in the work both fundraising and events. In late summer, the Board of Directors held their first meeting, and established a membership drive. This was, to our knowledge, the first effort of its kind to purposefully grow the Golden Eagles Club and private giving. Additionally, changes were made to materials which outlined donor (individual) and sponsor (businesses) opportunities. The goal of the membership drive was to raise \$50,000 in six weeks with the membership drive kicking off in mid-August. As of early September, the amount raised was a little over \$49,000.

Transform LCCC Athletics Facilities.

One of the positives of COVID is that we had to reimagine how spectators entered the RAC. This is a change that we will continue to utilize moving forward as it creates a better environment for fans and the teams competing. While this is a small change to our current facilities, the 2020 legislative session provided an opportunity for funding of a RAC renovation. As of September 2021, this project was moving forward with final steps anticipated to be completed by October 2021.

Wise exploration of areas for potential expansion of Golden Eagles Athletics offerings.

The first step in expansion occurred during the 2020-2021 academic year with the addition of an Esports team. In early September the teams begin scrimmages in Call of Duty: Cold War, Rocket League, Smash Brothers, Hearthstone, Call of Duty: War Zone, Valorant and Call of Duty: CW Gunfight. This expansion allowed LCCC to be on the forefront of this growing sport. As of September 2021, the team has 20 student athletes committed and more than half of them are new to LCCC.

Conclusion

While there were many challenges presented to LCCC Golden Eagles Athletics during the 2020-2021 academic year—a pandemic, budget cuts, poor air quality-- the department continued to move forward and strove to provide a quality experience for our student athletes.

In the first pillar of academic success, the department achieved a 3.07 and 3.14 cumulative grade point average for fall and spring semester respectively. Over 40 student athletes were recognized for academic excellence at the regional or national level and over 20 student athletes completed their degrees. More than 10 student athletes transferred from LCCC to a four-year institution to continue their athletic and academic careers.

For competitive success, the second pillar of athletics strategic plan, all the athletic teams finished in the top four in either Region IX or the Central Rocky Mountain Region. Additionally, we had two teams qualify for national tournaments and two student athletes qualify for the College National Finals Rodeo.

Campus engagement was one of the more challenging aspects as the majority of the campus existed in the virtual world. Athletic teams attended the fall theater production which was held outdoors. The athletic department held a virtual food drive and was presented a check to the Western States Bank Food Pantry for \$550.00. As well as at the end of the academic year the head coaches, sports

information manager, and athletic director completed inventory, restocked shelves, and removed expired items from the food pantry.

And the final pillar, community engagement, was accomplished in a variety of ways. The Greenway around LCCC was cleaned by the men's soccer program. All the athletic teams participated in a letter exchange with members of Life Care Centers of Cheyenne. Women's soccer coached youth soccer teams and the women's basketball program participated in the virtual Girls on the Run event.

While the past year was challenging, Golden Eagle Athletics, through adapting and focusing on the areas we could control, Golden Eagle Athletic learned to be more flexible, more creative, and to work even more collaboratively with internal and external stakeholders. Through this process the four pillars of the athletic strategic plan were met.