

## Release of Strength and Conditioning Program Review Report

**June 1, 2018**

A review of the strength & conditioning program demonstrates that the UC Berkeley athletic department has taken steps over the past few years to further enhance the health and safety of its student-athletes while also suggesting a number of recommendations for future consideration, many of which are already being met through current systems and processes.

The report, titled “Ideas, Perspectives, and Aspirations: Suggestions About Ways To Further Protect The Health and Safety of Athletes in the Football Program,” was commissioned by former Chancellor Nicholas Dirks in the fall of 2016. Dr. Elizabeth Joy, the immediate past president of the American College of Sports Medicine, and the Honorable Judge Wayne D. Brazil (retired) served as authors.

“The purpose of this paper is to provide Campus leadership with ideas about additional steps that might be taken, in a perfect world, to reduce as much as possible the risks to health and safety that inhere in active participation in competitive Division One football programs,” Joy and Brazil wrote.

The report states that “the Athletic Department, over the past three years, has actively reviewed many of the rules, procedures, protocols and practices that relate to or implicate the health and safety of student athletes. As a result of its internal process, the Department has added, changed or clarified many important policies related to health and safety – all for the better.”

The report outlines more than 40 structural and non-structural practices and protocols to protect and promote the health of student-athletes. Since its initial commission, the scope of the review changed to become an aspirational document given transitions in key leadership positions, including a new Chancellor, Associate Chancellor, Director of Athletics and football coaching staff.

“The ideas and suggestions set forth in this paper imply no criticism,” the authors wrote. “Nor are they based on any unfavorable comparisons with other institutions. Rather, they are the product of research and thinking whose purpose has been to identify a host of means, some small, some more ambitious, that Cal’s leaders might consider as they continue to pursue the shared goal of maximizing, to the extent feasible, the protection and promotion of the health and safety of students engaged in intercollegiate athletics.”

In the course of their research, Joy and Brazil interviewed members of the football staff and the strength & conditioning units within the athletic department, current and former football student-athletes, campus administrators, members of the Cal sports medicine staff, and personnel with both University Health Services and the NCAA. They also examined research published by the National Strength and Conditioning Association, the National Athletic Trainers Association (NATA) and the NCAA, in addition to assessing University and department policies. Dr. Joy also attended the Interassociation Summit on the Organization and Administration of Athletics Health Care Services in the College/University Environment, an intensive, interactive conference jointly sponsored by the NCAA’s Sport Science Institute

and NATA.

Joy and Brazil listed six primary themes essential to their findings:


- The health and safety of its student-athletes is the responsibility of the Berkeley campus as a whole, not solely of the professionals in the athletic department and University Health Services.
- Professionals with medical licenses and degrees must have in theory, and must meaningfully exercise in fact, complete and unchallengeable control over all healthcare related matters in athletics.
- Cooperative, interdisciplinary, team approaches to developing policies and protocols should be required – but ultimate responsibility for the essential elements of policy, for the specific content of practices, and for assuring compliance must be located in clearly designated individuals, individuals who understand that they bear this ultimate responsibility.
- Perhaps the greatest single challenge the campus community will face in the coming years is assuring the delivery of needed and appropriate mental health services to student-athletes.
- Monitoring for compliance with policies also presents a considerable challenge.
- Persuading the athletes that they are essential sources of information about their own health – and that they bear their share of responsibility for it – represents yet another significant challenge to building an effective system in this arena.

“Protecting the health and safety of our student-athletes is the highest priority for the Cal Sports Medicine Department, and we are continually evaluating and striving to improve our procedures and practices in that regard,” Director of Athletics Jim Knowlton said.

Many existing policies and procedures provide services substantially beyond current guidance and standard practices. In fact, the Cal sports medicine model for the oversight of student-athlete safety has been presented at both the Pac-12 Student-Athlete Health Conference and the American Medical Society for Sports Medicine Conference within the past year as an example for other schools and the Pac-12 to consider adopting. In tandem, UC Berkeley’s University Health Services has been working towards increased coordination and collaboration with Intercollegiate Athletics in the area of quality assurance and improvement with satellite clinics at the Simpson Center adjacent to California Memorial Stadium and at the Haas Pavilion training room.

To further broaden the scope of oversight and input, Cal Sports Medicine has established a Student-Athlete Wellness Committee that focuses on student-athlete wellness needs and initiatives, physical and mental health, risk reduction, and athletic and academic performance. The committee includes representatives from Intercollegiate Athletics, University Health Services, student-athletes, faculty, Risk Management and the Dean of Students office.

“I believe this is a thoughtful and constructive report that we are taking very seriously given our commitment to the health and safety of all of our student-athletes,” UC Berkeley Chancellor Carol Christ said. “I was impressed and satisfied with the report’s finding that Cal Athletics has ‘added, changed or clarified many important policies related to health and



safety - all for the better.' By the same token, I was pleased to learn that Cal Athletics is already operating in a manner consistent with the majority of the report's recommendations and, together with our new Athletic Director, I intend to give serious consideration to all of the remaining recommendations. Even though the report describes our program as a 'good' one, we can and should strive to make it even better."

Among the proposals for new resources are ensuring that the associate team physician is the equivalent of a full-time position and the addition of a full-time clinical psychologist and a healthcare administrator. Many ideas outlined in the report have already been completed or are in the process of being implemented, and they include: enacting a policy that ensures that athletic trainers and physicians have unchallengeable authority over all healthcare-related and return-to-play matters, piloting yearly mental health screening for student-athletes, and requiring yearly mental health education for coaches and athletic trainers. In addition, decisions and implementation approach on some of the more complicated or resource intensive ideas will be made jointly by Christ and Knowlton, who began his term as Director of Athletics on May 21.

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