

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY PUEBLO
Intercollegiate Athletics

-ANNUAL REPORT FOR STUDENT FEE GOVERNING BOARD (SFGB)-

Written by Paul Plinske, Vice President for Athletics and Strategic Partnerships-
November 7, 2025

Mission and Vision

The mission of Intercollegiate Athletics is to develop champions through academic excellence, athletic achievement and community engagement with the ultimate goal of building productive citizens. Our vision is to be an athletic powerhouse and the standard for holistic student-athlete development and academic opportunity.

Strategic Goals

Athletics aligns its goals with CSU Pueblo's institutional mission to enhance student access, engagement and success. For FY26, Athletics aims to:

1. Increase student-athlete retention by 2%.
2. Improve student-athlete satisfaction (Net Promoter Score) from +13.7 to +20.
3. Increase student attendance at athletic events by 10%.
4. Strengthen operational efficiency to support financial sustainability and compliance.

Student Needs Fulfilled

Student fees are essential to Athletics' ability to support more than 550 student-athletes while enhancing the broader student experience. These funds directly:

- Provide scholarships that alleviate financial burdens and promote academic focus.
- Offer leadership and personal development opportunities through Athletics.
- Foster school pride and belonging across campus through free access to sporting events and community engagement activities.

Student Needs Fulfilled and Outcomes

CSU Pueblo Athletics experienced a landmark year with significant achievements in academics, competition and community service in 2024-25:

1. Academic Excellence

- **3.22 Grade Point Average** (among 550 student-athletes)
- Elite 90 Recipient – Katherine Higgins, outdoor track and field
- RMAC Scholar Athlete of the Year – Katherine Higgins
- Brechler Award Recipient – Women's Cross Country (3.828 GPA)

2. Athletic Achievement

- **12th in LEARFIELD Directors' Cup** (out of 305 NCAA Division II institutions)
 - 592.50 points – Most points in school history (2nd highest place in RMAC)
- **3rd in RMAC All-Sports Competition Cup** (out of 15 RMAC member institutions)
 1. Colorado Mesa – 845.7 points
 2. Colorado School of Mines – 842.5 points
 3. **CSU Pueblo – 801.5 points** (highest place since 2016-17)
 4. UCCS – 719.5 points

- **National Top Ten Finishes**
 - Women's Cross Country – 3rd Place (highest in school history)
 - Men's Soccer – 3rd Place
 - Football – 9th Place
 - Women's Indoor Track and Field – 6th Place (highest in school history)
 - Women's Outdoor Track and Field – 9th Place (highest in school history)
- **Four National Champions**
 - Helen Braybrook, indoor 800-meter run
 - Distance Medley Relay Team, indoor
 - Reece Sharmen-Newell, outdoor 1500-meter run
 - Katherine Higgins, outdoor shot put
- **Three National Runner-Ups**
 - Katherine Higgins, indoor shot put
 - Reece Sharmen-Newell, indoor mile
 - Helen Braybrook, outdoor 800-meter run
- **33 Number of All-American Performances**
 - Men's Cross Country – 1
 - Women's Cross Country – 3
 - Football – 3
 - Men's Soccer – 2
 - Men's Indoor Track and Field – 7
 - Women's Indoor Track and Field – 8
 - Women's Basketball – 1
 - Baseball – 1
 - Men's Outdoor Track and Field – 2
 - Women's Outdoor Track and Field – 5
- **Three RMAC Championships**
 - Football
 - Men's Soccer (plus RMAC Tournament Championships)
 - Women's Golf

3. Community Engagement

- **8,634 Community Service Hours**
 - State Fair Parade/Rodeo and Fiesta Day Parade
 - Boys and Girls Club and YMCA Junior ThunderWolves
 - D60 and D70 School District Partnerships
- Hosted the 2024 CHSAA State Football Championships (6-man, 8-man, 1A, 2A)
- Hosted the 2025 NCAA Division II Outdoor Track and Field Championships
- Hosted the 2025 CHSCA All-State Games

4. Additional Accomplishments

- **Colorado Sports Hall of Fame Collegiate Athlete of the Year** – Alisha Little
- **RMAC Woman of the Year** – Katherine Higgins

Student-Athlete Participation

The Athletic Department tracks its history of participation numbers to analyze our funding needs and determine the amount of male and female participants for Title IX compliance. The history of our participation (along with projections for the current year) is outlined below:

2018-19	532
2019-20	577
2020-21	580
2021-22	636
2022-23	668
2023-24	619
2024-25	548
2025-26	550 (Projected)

The average NCAA Division II institution supports 463 student-athletes and 15.9 teams. In 2024-25, CSU Pueblo supported 548 student-athletes among 20 varsity sports (9 men, 11 women). This was a decrease of 71 based on the reduction of men’s lacrosse and other male sport roster sizes. In 2025-26, it is projected that Athletics will maintain approximately 550 student-athletes.

In 2019, Athletics made a concerted effort to expand roster sizes in all sports to assist CSU Pueblo with declining enrollment. However, additional student-athletes put a tremendous burden on our budget, created additional work for our support staff and became more difficult to manage. With decreasing participation numbers, we will be able to manage our finances better, support our staff (especially sports medicine and sport performance) and provide an improved student-athlete experience.

Student-Athlete Satisfaction

At the end of each sport season, we conduct a student-athlete survey (*RealResponse*) to assess the student-athlete’s experience to learn how we can improve while building on our recruitment and retention efforts.

The survey takes approximately 15-20 minutes to complete and is administered in a controlled environment by the administration. Coaches are not allowed to be in attendance. A great deal of information is gathered from our student-athletes, but one of the most essential indicators is the Net Promoter Score (NPS). Following the surveys, the athletic administration reviews all survey results and then presents this information back to the head coaches. The NPS is a common measure of student-athlete satisfaction. The values range from -100 (worst possible) to +100 (best possible). To get the final NPS score, we subtract the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters, then multiply by 100.

During the 2024-25 academic year, we surveyed 18 varsity sports and the Overall Net Promoter Score (NPS) for the entire department was +13.7. The NPS for Head Coaches was +13.9. The chart shows the outcome of each sport.

As we review the relevance of the Net Promoter Score, our head coaches in baseball, wrestling, volleyball and football are highly regarded by their student-athletes. While the scores do not yet reflect the recent leadership changes in men’s basketball and men’s soccer, it is notable that women’s lacrosse, women’s soccer and softball received much lower ratings than expected. In response, we have implemented targeted action plans for each of these programs to enhance student-athlete satisfaction and support ongoing improvement.

Net Promoter Scores (2024-2025)		
Sport	Head Coach	Overall Experience
Baseball	87	70
Basketball (M)	Coaching change	
Basketball (W)	36	18
Football	40	32
Golf (M)	20	60
Golf (W)	33	16
Lacrosse (W)	-69	-61
Soccer (M)	Coaching change	
Soccer (W)	-62	-45
Softball	-50	-40
Swimming & Diving	25	33
Tennis (W)	20	0
Track/CC (M)	14	-7
Track/CC (W)	-5	5
Volleyball	44	50
Wrestling	61	61
AVERAGE	13.9	13.7

Student Attendance at Sporting Events

Another critical component to the Student Fee process is that all CSU Pueblo students receive free admission to regular season sporting events. In 2024-25, CSU Pueblo Athletics had 46,884 individuals attending sporting events from the fall to the spring. Student attendance was 3,863 of that total number. Approximately 1,908 students attended Pack football games; 955 attended men's and women's basketball games; and 267 attended volleyball matches. It can be assumed that a large portion of students in attendance are fellow student-athletes. The chart provides a breakdown by sport of total sales, attendance and student attendance.

2024-25 Ticket Report	Total Sales	Total Attendance	Student Attendance
Men's Soccer	\$ 2,200.00	269	69
Women's Soccer	\$ 1,545.00	26	128
Volleyball	\$ 6,210.00	667	267
Football	\$ 58,131.00	35,052	1,908
Wrestling	\$ 575.00	564	164
Basketball	\$ 10,848.00	7,955	955
WLAX	\$ 1,380.00	172	72
Baseball	\$ 4,445.00	539	39
Track	\$ 6,350.00	826	80
Softball	\$ 3,190.00	381	181
Turner Suite Payment	\$ 6,600.00	0	
Pack Passes	\$ 500.00	2	
Parking	\$ 4,310.00	431	
Totals	\$ 106,284.00	46,884	3,863

It is important to note that NCAA rules permit student-athletes to four (4) complimentary tickets per contest. Parents, family members and other guests may attend a sporting event for free.

Governance Structure and Oversight

Athletics Student Fee Sub-Committee (2025-26) consists of seven members. They are:

- Molly Charles, Associated Students Government (ASG)
- Skylar Clark, Associated Students Government (ASG)
- JJ McCranie, Associated Students Government (ASG)
- Sam Howery, Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC)
- Krista Bridgmon, Athletic Board of Controls
- Jenna McKinley-Fall, Associate Athletic Director/Senior Woman Administrator
- Paul Plinske, Vice President for Athletics and Strategic Partnerships

Subcommittee Duties and Meetings

The committee has met or will meet three times in Fall 2025 to review finances, operations and planning for future student fee requests. The agendas are as follows:

- October Meeting: Reviewed SFGB expectations, Athletics operations and FY25 annual report.
- November Meeting: Reviewed FY26 budget, fall ticket revenue and historical revenue analysis.
- December Meeting: Discussed FY27 student fee planning, Title IX compliance and NIL education.

The group fulfilled several significant subcommittee duties:

- Review Athletics' financial performance and ensure compliance with SFGB fee purpose.
- Advise on annual student fee requests and budgetary planning.
- Evaluate student-athlete satisfaction and report findings to SFGB.
- Ensure transparency in decision-making and promote fiscal accountability.

Financial Re-Cap, Review and Budget Analysis

FY26 Student Fee Request

In our fee request to the SFGB in the spring 2025, we asked for an increase of \$.50 per credit hour to address the following needs:

1. Costs of inflation.

- a. This is a common theme among college sport programs and especially critical for CSU Pueblo as we sponsor 20-varsity teams who represent our institution in competitions on and off campus. The largest expense in our Student Fee budget is our operations. This is troublesome since rising costs are due to inflation, yet we have expectations to support these student-athletes and maintain a positive collegiate experience.

2. Maintain current Student Fee Revenue levels.

- a. In Spring 2024, the Student Fee Governing Board agreed to increase the Athletics fee to **\$16.25 per credit hour** (\$.75 increase from previous year). In order to keep our Student Fee allocation similar, with declining enrollment, we requested an additional .50 per credit hour for 2025-26. The chart below shows the impact so we can maintain our revenue levels.

	<u>Student Fee Per Credit Hour</u>	<u>Total Student Fee Revenue</u>	<u>Percentage Total Budget</u>
2014-15	\$12.65	\$1,426,448	25%
2015-16	\$12.65	\$1,329,088	21%
2016-17	\$12.65	\$1,386,055	19%
2017-18	\$13.65	\$1,342,628	19%
2018-19	\$14.00	\$1,335,865	16%
2019-20	\$15.00	\$1,323,507	16%
2020-21	\$15.50	\$1,224,307	14.5%
2021-22	\$15.50	\$1,181,719	14%
2022-23	\$15.50	\$1,140,375	11%
2023-24	\$15.50	\$1,107,058	11%
2024-25	\$16.25	\$1,186,250	11%
2025-26	\$16.75	\$1,222,750	TBD

3. To align with our Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference (RMAC) peers.

- a. In a recent analysis of RMAC budgets, CSU Pueblo currently sits third overall. The chart below shows the actual expenditures of most RMAC schools in FY24.

It is important to note that we sponsor the second most sports behind Colorado Mesa, while also having varsity football. While Colorado Mines and Colorado Mesas are funded much better than CSU Pueblo, there are also several schools who are funding their sports better than CSU Pueblo based on the number of sports they sponsor. Western Colorado, Fort Lewis, UCCS (no football) and Metro State (no football) are spending as much or more than CSU Pueblo on athletics based on each sport. An increase of \$.50 per student (per credit hour) will help us to maintain our competitiveness within the RMAC.

RMAC Schools		
Colorado Mines	\$16.96 m	18 sports
Colorado Mesa	\$14.92 m	22 sports
CSU Pueblo	\$11.70 m	20 sports
Western Colorado	\$9.61 m	13 sports
Fort Lewis	\$8.60 m	16 sports
UCCS	\$7.80 m	14 sports
Metro State	\$7.67 m	14 sports
Adams State	\$7.47 m	20 sports
Chadron State	\$7.25 m	14 sports
New Mexico Highlands	\$7.01 m	12 sports
Black Hills State	\$6.74 m	13 sports
South Dakota Mines	\$5.59 m	13 sports
*Private Schools	Do not report	

4. To help Athletics maintain our appeal and enhance student success.

- a. Lastly, Athletics has risen to national heights while performing exceptionally well in the classroom and serving our community. This is mainly because of our student-athletes, coaches and staff. An increase to our Student Fee will help Athletics to maintain its appeal and enhance student success.

- b. In FY26, we have been charged with making significant base cuts within our organizational infrastructure. This includes raising an additional \$2 million in external revenue. It is paramount that we work to protect mission-critical entities such as Athletics so that we can maintain our appeal and student success.

Use of Student Fees

The Athletic Department estimates that its Student Fee Revenue in 2025-26 will be approximately \$1,222,750. This is based on estimates and history of student fees received. Annually, Student Fees are budgeted and used in the following manner:

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
Scholarships	\$350,000	Attract and retain student-athletes
Operations	\$747,750	Team travel, game officials, uniforms and equipment
Administrative Costs	<u>\$125,000</u>	Student-athlete support
Total	\$1,222,750	

Student fee support is essential to Athletics in that it provides much-needed scholarships and funding for operations. Annually, the Athletic Department spends approximately \$3.3 million on scholarships. The average student-athlete receives approximately \$5,000 in financial aid from Athletics. The \$350,000 in Student Fee support enables Athletics to support 73 student-athletes each year.

FY26 Budget Analysis

In addition to Student Fees, the Athletic Department operates with various funding sources to support its 20 varsity sports. These include both internal and external funding sources. Internal sources are supported through the University (through E&G transfers) and Student Fees. All other sources of revenue are external. The chart below shows the revenue sources used to support Athletics.

Revenues

University E&G	\$5,585,056
-Base Reduction	(\$2,000,000)
Additional Funds Generated	\$2,000,000
Student Fees (\$16.75 per credit hr. x 73,000)	\$1,222,750
Camps and Clinics	\$861,500
Ticket Sales	<u>\$450,000</u>
Total Revenues	\$10,594,778

Expenses

Salaries and Benefits	\$3,505,025
Scholarships	\$3,380,000
Camps and Clinics	\$531,500
Operations	<u>\$3,178,253</u>
Total Expenses	\$10,594,778

In the spring 2025, it was determined that Athletics would implement a \$2 million base reduction from its Education and General (E&G) transfer in order to assist the University with an incremental budget shortfall. The presumption was that Athletics could raise an additional \$2 million in external sources to offset the loss.

Last year, CSU Pueblo Athletics generated the most external revenue of any NCAA Division II institution in the country. The numbers below reflect the work that is being done by Athletics to support its student athletes.

External Revenue Sources

Contributions	\$1,394,440
Guarantees	\$19,000
NCAA Disbursements	\$261,953
RMAC Disbursements	\$5,644
Programs, Parking	\$11,971
Royalties	\$27,811
Pay-Per-View Revenue Share	\$40,000
Other (Transportation)	<u>\$714,653</u>
Total	\$2,475,472

New Fund Raising

New fund-raising efforts have been underway since the start of the fiscal year. Any new funds will be deposited into the newly developed 265 account for Athletics. To date, approximately \$300,000 in new revenue has been accumulated and monies deposited as received. This fall and winter, the Athletic Department will engage in a \$1.5 million fund-raising campaign to elevate external funding. We have also placed an expectation on sport programs that they must engage in fund raising efforts as well. Among our sports, there are fundraising goals of \$747,000 to contribute to the overall amounts raised by Athletics.

FY26 Quarter 1 Update

As of October 31 (Quarter 1), the Athletic Department identified that it was off track compared to its Budget to Actual Seasonality Report. Revenues were short \$258,681 vs. seasonal budget and expenses were over seasonal budget by \$564,255. As a result, the Department implemented a *Budget Recovery Plan*, which entailed an immediate 10% cut in operations, spring scholarship reductions, purchase approval for anything over \$300, froze any Under Armour purchases, paused supplemental payments and implemented travel restrictions. Our projected savings are \$790,000 and will be realized each month until June 30, 2026.

History of Athletics Fund Balance and Annual Treasury Interest Charges

Athletics has struggled to balance revenues with expenses for a long time. The History of Athletics Fund Balance outlines this concern, along with the Treasury Interest Charges that impact our ability to capitalize on revenue generated.

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Deficit</u>	<u>Treasury Interest</u>
FY18	-\$46,999	
FY19	-\$316,040	
FY20	-\$1,172,153	\$62,379
FY21	-\$1,935,131	\$49,941
FY22	-\$2,266,798	\$61,090
FY23	-\$3,661,784	\$166,399
FY24	-\$5,528,731	\$303,857
FY25	-\$5,831,845	\$364,145
FY26		<u>\$192,292, to date</u>
Total		\$1,200,103

Athletics' historical deficits are linked to enrollment decline, pandemic disruptions (no camps or football season) and loss of donor revenue due to discontinuation of the Friends of Football, LLC. Corrective actions are being implemented to stabilize the budget so we don't continue to have a building deficit.

Moving Forward

The Athletic Department remains committed to transparency, student success and financial responsibility. Key initiatives include:

- Expanding external fundraising and sponsorships.
- Increasing student engagement and attendance.
- Maintaining national excellence while aligning resources with institutional priorities.

Closing Remarks

The Athletics Student Fee Subcommittee respectfully submits this report and extends appreciation to the Student Fee Governing Board for its ongoing partnership and oversight. Student Fees remain vital to supporting our 550 student-athletes, fostering campus pride and sustaining CSU Pueblo's tradition of excellence.

Respectfully submitted,

Molly Charles, Associated Students Government (ASG)

Skylar Clark, Associated Students Government (ASG)

JJ McCranie, Associated Students Government (ASG)

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