

THE VALUE OF SPORT

We know the value of competitive sport for tertiary students.

Sport has a positive impact on the wellbeing of students through the physical, social and mental benefits associated with being involved in organised sport and competition.

We know that sport plays a key role in many students' positive experiences of their time at university; making friends for life, creating a "family" and support network away from home, building employability and life skills and supporting both their physical and mental wellbeing.

An increasing body of international evidence suggests that increased participation in sport also leads to improved academic and social outcomes; benefiting students, schools and communities.

In the sport sector, these broad benefits are acknowledged in the drive to grow youth and community sport. Community sport is also a feeder into high performance sport and the 18-25-year age group is a pivotal one for achieving competitive, high performance outcomes.

We know also that participation in sport can aid the transition between secondary and tertiary education environments; increasing recruitment, retention, accelerating friendships and creating a sense of identity and belonging.

It is important therefore that tertiary institutions continue to encourage students to take part in sport and provide opportunities for them to do so alongside their studies.

The tertiary sector is a diverse and significant market for sport.

- In 2020, there were 380,255 students studying in New Zealand tertiary institutions.
- Of this number, 329,335 were domestic students (86%), 50,920 were international students (14%).
- 53% were female and 43% were male students.
- The majority of tertiary students in 2020 were 20 to 24 years old (28%, n = 105,175) and 25 to 39 years old (26%, n = 100,555).
- Of the 380,255 students enrolled 10,805 students were under 18 years old and 43,870 were aged between 18 and 19 years old.
- Of our domestic students, 18% were Maori, 14% Asian and 9% Pacific Peoples.
- 4000 students were enrolled in the field of sport and recreation.



THE VALUE OF SPORT TO THE TERTIARY SECTOR

What do we know about the value of competitive sport in the tertiary sector?

There are strong theoretical grounds for assuming that sport can contribute to a range of outcomes in tertiary education. A number of associations have been made between tertiary sport and a host of positive outcomes for both individuals and institutions.

Below we summarise some of the key benefits from having a quality tertiary sport structure in place.

Increased Enrolments - There is evidence to suggest that investment made into sports programmes and facilities is an attraction for students when selecting a university or tertiary institute - particularly for students who are competitive sport participants or who are looking for an institution that will offer them a well-rounded life experience. A quality sport programme and profile can help attract prospective students.

Positive Student Experiences - A stimulating and rewarding 'student experience' is key to students engaging positively with their institution and their study. Tertiary institutions operate in an increasingly competitive environment, so improving the student experience to attract and retain students is a high priority. At an international level, student participation in arenas such as the FISU World University events provides them with exposure to the environment of representing their university and their country, developing coping skills in a high-performance environment and delivering lifelong learning experiences from both a sport and cultural diversity viewpoint. Evidence suggests sport offerings/provision are a notable driver of student experience scores and these in turn are major part of positioning sport in recruitment terms.

Improved Engagement and Retention - Sport can help students to cope with academic pressures and stress, not just through the benefits regular physical activity provides for mental and physical health, but through the social support networks. Belonging to a sports club/team and joining events also helps with social and cultural integration. Student engagement in campus life and positive experiences through sport can impact student retention.

Increased Employability - Having participated in sport, particularly when students can demonstrate structured engagement (competition attendance, being a sport leader, volunteering, event management etc.) enhances student employability. Employers recognise the value of graduates having been involved in sport and actively look for mention of sports involvement in graduate job applications. This is because sport enhances soft skills such as teamwork, relating to others, leadership, planning, communication, time management, resilience, problem solving and adaptability. Students know structured sport participation can help with a well-rounded resume.



Engagement of International students - Sport is a vehicle that can cross gender, ethnicity, religious and cultural boundaries. It has been shown to help international students engage more positively with their tertiary institution, make friends and improve their general cultural integration. It also offers them an avenue to take leadership positions on campus. The ability to market as a 'sport' university also can be a powerful recruitment tool and can add significantly to international profile.

Support Equity in Achievement - The government is seeking further strengthening of the tertiary education sector's focus on supporting improved achievement from two key groups: Māori and Pasifika learners. Particular sports can engage particular ethnicities and research shows that positive sport participation can engage and empower students. There is also some evidence that sport participation has a positive effect on time management, educational productivity, aspirations to engage in tertiary education and increased chance of obtaining a degree.

Profile and Business Sustainability - Internationally, some universities have identified that sport has the ability to generate revenue to help offset the cost of provision. Sport and recreation can support marketing and visibility of a tertiary institution into its wider community leveraging sponsorship and investment.

Growing International Linkages - International sport connections stimulate international linkages with overseas counterparts. International opportunities as a result of sport affiliations open the doors to participation of tertiary institutions and tertiary students at events and forums all across the globe. Leverage of these opportunities in relation to university profile and marketing is growing.

Alumni Engagement – For many Alumni, sport is an opportunity to give back to the university or tertiary institution they once attended. Research has shown some correlation between alumni giving and tertiary institution teams' on-the-field success. Alumni can be a valuable source of not just funding, but also coaching, officiating and mentoring support in the tertiary sport space and links into industry.

