

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 TERTIARY SPORT TO THE SPORT SECTOR

What can competitive sport in the tertiary sector contribute to the wider sport sector?

There are strong theoretical grounds for assuming that sport can contribute to a range of outcomes in tertiary education and that sport in turn will benefit from tertiary age participation. A number of associations have been made between tertiary sport and a host of positive outcomes for both athletes and sport.

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

Grow the Participation Base - Tertiary institutions have a captive audience in comparison to other post-secondary school environments. This audience is therefore easier to market to. Also, students are more likely to try something new and take up new learning opportunities, including sports. Many TEIs already recognise the value of competitive sport and are aligning and increasing resources for sporting infrastructure and opportunities.

Address the secondary-tertiary drop-off - The drop of participation in community sport, both social and competitive for the 18-25 age group, has been a cause for concern for some years. The tertiary environment provides an institutional framework for the continuance of secondary sport involvement, with options for social and/or higher performance development. In particular, a quality inter-tertiary sport structure offers a bridge to overcome the gap that occurs in the post-secondary school transition, which is vital to maintain participation and competition pathways.

Building Sport Sector Capacity and Capability - The tertiary sport sector delivers most of the teaching and training for the skills and disciplines required for sport and recreation leadership, management, operations, officiating, research, innovation and development. Tertiary institutions also have good infrastructure and cultures to support volunteer development. Again, the more tertiary sport programmes, structures and offerings within and between tertiary institutions, the more we offer opportunities to train and build the sport workforce.

Retaining Athletes - Where there is an absence of quality sport opportunities in New Zealand, many tertiary students are attracted to academic/competition programmes offered overseas – they may not return to participate as elite athletes, or to the workforce as skilled professionals. Provision of quality tertiary sporting opportunities may assist in preventing this migration.

Improve Athlete Welfare - Building tertiary sport and tertiary sport partnerships can build important relationships between high performance programmes and tertiary institutions - vital for ensuring athlete well-being and achievement. Many high-performance athletes are also students - partnerships between their TEIs and NSOs can help ensure their sporting and academic aspirations are realised. For example, 47% of New Zealand's Tokyo 2020 team was composed tertiary student-athletes, many of whom received campus-based support.



Providing Strategic Facilities - Many larger tertiary institutions are effectively sports hubs - usually not just with single facilities but with facility clusters, along with support, administrative and technical services and resourcing. Some single facilities are highly strategic and usually provided to a high standard with good capacity. Together, all facilities associated with tertiary institutions represent a large component of regional sports facilities nationwide. In recent times, some institutions are specialising their facilities to contribute to or complement nearby centres of excellence.

Impact Talent Development - Universities and tertiary institutions can help grow the elite athlete talent pool. They offer a setting and expertise to better prepare athletes for high performance through quality sporting experiences in the 'development phase' of talent development. A strong competition structure in the tertiary sector is essential for this. In addition, international affiliations aligned to that competition structure provide opportunities to participate at international events e.g. the World University Summer Games. Held every two years, this event mirrors an Olympic Games in terms of athlete participation levels and organisational infrastructure. This offers an ideal opportunity to 'blood' elite athletes and administrators for future Commonwealth and Olympic Games.

Tertiary institutions also support the sporting system through targeted research and provision of education and training opportunities in athlete and talent and development. They lead best practice in athlete development, through education and the curriculum delivered to students (the workforce of the future).

Growing Research and Innovation - Tertiary institutions can contribute significantly to sport research. Virtually all sports research and development is associated in some way with tertiary institutions. Tertiary institutions also provide opportunities for data collection and analysis through their student ID systems. This makes them well placed to collate and provide valuable insights into the 18-24 year old student market. The establishment of tertiary sport programmes, structures and offerings within and between tertiary institutions, are crucial to drive and feed such research.

Strategic resourcing and investment - Tertiary institutions are large businesses and have high capacity for significantly investing in strategic partnerships, facility provision, events, programmes and athletes. They can do this individually or in collaborative partnerships of significant scale. Examples include the AUT-Millennium Institute partnership; the connections between Waikato University and the Avantidrome; the hosting of the Cricket Academy at Lincoln University; sponsorship of the Highlanders by Otago University.

