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## **Campus Recreation Management Software Allows You to Efficiently Manage all Aspects of Campus Recreation**

*An examination of 12 common challenges and their software-based solutions*

*By Philip J. Gustafson*

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Operating a Campus Recreation facility is a complex endeavor. You need to be concerned with programming, aquatics, intramurals, special events, pickup sports, facility and equipment rentals, and somewhere in there, people just want to come in and use an elliptical machine for 30 minutes. It is a juggling act where you are constantly trying to keep everybody happy – including, and sometimes especially, those people in the Administration offices across campus. In the following pages, I will list twelve challenges shared by all Campus Recreation facilities, and how a good Campus Recreation Management Software system will help make those challenges easier to manage.

### **Challenge One: Accurately Recording Facility Usage Information**

The line items in any organization's or individual's budget are assigned a value according to where the needs of the organization or individual lie. One challenge that Campus Recreation departments face is showing the financial department that there is indeed a need for their services. The best way to show this is to prove that people are using the facility and its services. **You need a Campus Recreation Management Software system that will keep record of every person who accesses your facility.** Additionally, it is very helpful if the system allows you to analyze that usage data so that you can determine your "peak flow" days of week and times of day. Also, by analyzing the demographic data of your users, you can not only tailor the services you offer to meet the needs of the user, but also target your marketing to attract the populations that are not well represented.

### **Challenge Two: Restricting Facility Access to Eligible Users Only**

Whether you charge an "out of pocket" membership fee for facility access or the fee structure of the college/university covers the membership costs, people are paying to use the facility. Campus Recreation facilities are attractive, full-service facilities – therefore, many people want to use them. Sometimes, a certain individual's privilege of accessing the facility may need to be suspended. Allowing eligible users into the facility, but keeping those who have not been granted access out of the facility due to a disciplinary or other reason, can be challenging. **You need a Campus Recreation Management Software system that will restrict access from those who have been denied access.** It is also very beneficial to have a system that will track attempts to gain access by those people who have been denied access.

### **Challenge Three: Managing, Analyzing, and Updating Member Information**

Modern Campus Recreation facilities record a wide variety of information on their members. They track demographics such as age, gender, class level, major, and ethnicity in addition to the standard contact information of address, phone number, and email addresses. Using this information, the facility staff can tailor their programming and activities to better meet the needs of the population that they serve. **You need a Campus Recreation Management Software system that allows you to store a wide variety of information, and allows you to specify additional pieces of information that you would like to track.** Of course, we all know that this information can change suddenly and frequently. The ability to automatically update your information with new information from the central university database becomes necessary.

### **Challenge Four: Tracking the Revenue Your Facility Generates**

In addition to the fees collected for membership, the modern Campus Recreation facility has many products and services that it offers for a fee. Often, these fees vary by the type of user (Student, Faculty/Staff, Alumni, Community, etc.). **You need a Campus Recreation Management Software system that allows you to easily sell products and services at the appropriate price, and report on the revenue generated**

**by these sales.** In addition, you should be able to track quantity of the various products that you have in inventory, and the cost of sales for those products.

### **Challenge Five: Marketing to and Communicating With Your Users**

Anyone who has worked in Campus Recreation knows that you can offer the best services that have ever been dreamed of, and you can tailor your programming to fit your users perfectly, but you still need to be able to get the word out to your users in a variety of ways. On today's modern college campus, with cable tv and high-speed internet in all of the residence halls, posting a couple of signs in the student union building or putting a banner on the quad will no longer suffice. Nearly every institution now provides a free email account to its students, and many students check their email multiple times each day, thus making this an effective communication tool. **You need a Campus Recreation Management Software system that will allow you to quickly send emails to all or part of your user-base.** Another effective communication tool is to advertise services to people as they come into your facility, so a system that will allow you to specify a set of members who will receive a message as they come in will also be beneficial.

### **Challenge Six: Managing Space Usage Within Your Facility**

If your facility has been open for longer than an hour, you already know that rooms and other space within your facility is a valuable commodity. With so many things going on: programming, intramurals, campus groups, off-campus groups, academics, athletics, racquetball/squash court reservations, etc., it is difficult to find a place and time to accommodate all of these activities. **You need a Campus Recreation Management Software system that will allow you to see available spaces at a glance, taking into account the wide variety of possible configurations of those spaces.** Related to this is the need to track all of the chairs, tables, and equipment necessary to support these various events and functions, and (where necessary) to generate invoices for these functions.

### **Challenge Seven: Managing and Tracking Usage of Rental Equipment Inventory**

A modern Campus Recreation facility offers a wide variety of activities in which its users can participate. Part of this is offering the use of the equipment necessary for participation. This equipment will eventually need to be replaced due to wear, damage, and/or loss. **You need a Campus Recreation Management Software system that will allow you to track the usage of free and pay-per-use rental equipment items.** This system should allow you to see how often specific pieces of equipment have been used, the revenue generated by each item, and who currently is in possession of each item.

### **Challenge Eight: Managing the Various Programs and Activities You Offer**

Whether it's a specialty aerobics class that meets three times a week, a one-time rock wall belay certification class, a trip to the Grand Canyon, or weekly swim lessons, the programming gurus in your facility are going to offer programs in which people must enroll. Some of these require payment, others are offered for free. All require some level of maintenance. **You need a Campus Recreation Management Software system that will allow you to maintain the schedules and rosters of the enrollment-based programs you offer.** Additionally, you will need to be able to track demographic information on your participants, payroll for your instructors, and revenue that each instructor/program generates.

### **Challenge Nine: Managing Intramural and Club Sports Leagues and Tournaments**

Campus Recreation facilities and programs come in all different shapes and sizes. Some focus more on open-facility programming, others focus more in Intramural or League Sports. Whether your Intramural/Club

Sports program consists of a dozen teams participating in three sports two days a week or hundreds of teams participating in ten sports every night of the week, it can be tough to create a schedule and make sure the space and officials are booked for the games. **You need a Campus Recreation Management Software System that will schedule leagues and tournaments quickly and easily, while booking the court/field and officials for each game in your facility schedule.** You also need a way for your participants to access information from this system live and in real-time from anywhere on the internet.

### **Challenge Ten: Providing a Convenient Method for Users to Participate**

In today's digital world and on today's modern college campuses, the internet is playing a more and more important role in everyday life. Many universities have offered the ability for students to pay their tuition and fees online, have online application processes, and many are moving to an online system for students to enroll into classes each semester. **You need a Campus Recreation Management Software system that provides a real-time, interactive online interface to enroll in programs and intramural leagues, check account status, check league schedules and standings, and make reservations for court times, etc.** This system needs to be able to provide up-to-the-minute information on the user's account in your facility, available spaces in the programs you offer, and a schedule of available times for each resource.

### **Challenge Eleven: Keeping the Data Secure**

With so many concerns in today's world regarding identity theft, credit card fraud, and safety of information, keeping data secure is paramount. Colleges and universities go to great lengths to ensure that their networks and databases are secure from hackers, but that is irrelevant if your system puts that data into the wrong hands. **You need a Campus Recreation Management Software system from a company that is certified as Level 1 PCI Compliant and only allows users access to the data that they need.** This system should not even list the screens as possibilities if a user does not need to access it.

### **Challenge Twelve: Finding a Single-Source Solution that Does All of the Above**

The single biggest challenge any organization faces when it tries to use a different system for each task it requires is getting the data in each system to synchronize in a timely manner. Many organizations rely on a daily update to go from one central system to all of the others in the middle of the night, when the fewest users are active. However, there are times when daily is not often enough and the updates need to be real-time. This is where a single-source solution is truly advantageous over multiple systems, since there is only one database to update, and all of the modules access the data in that one central database.

Since 1978, CSI Software has been writing software to serve Campus Recreation Centers, health and fitness clubs, wellness centers, and other membership-based facilities. For more information, visit [www.csisoftwareusa.com](http://www.csisoftwareusa.com) or email [sales@csisoftwareusa.com](mailto:sales@csisoftwareusa.com).

#### **About the Author**

*Philip J. (PJ) Gustafson is a 2003 graduate of Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. As an undergraduate student, PJ worked for the SIUE Department of Campus Recreation for three years. He started by providing desktop computer support and audio/visual services for the department, and was cross-trained in all areas of the Student Fitness Center and Vadalabene Center facilities. PJ was eventually promoted to the position of Student Facility Supervisor and was responsible for overseeing shift operations of those facilities. He attended the 2003 NIRSA Region 3 Lead-On Conference at Ball State University. In his first year as a Campus Recreation employee, PJ was part of a team that researched software packages for the department and eventually selected the Spectrum Management System by CSI Software, which he used for the remainder of his time at SIUE.*

*After graduating, PJ was offered a position in the Technical Support and Training Department at CSI Software, and was promoted to the position of Senior Consultant in 2006. During his combined time in those positions, PJ implemented the Spectrum Management System at more than 15 Campus Recreation facilities. In February of 2007, PJ was promoted to his current position of Director of Educational Services, where he produces recorded training tutorials, printed training handouts, and hosts several live web seminars each week. He can be contacted at [pgustafson@csisoftwareusa.com](mailto:pgustafson@csisoftwareusa.com).*