UAB ATHLETICS

STRATEGIC OPERATING PLAN

JANUARY 2018 - DECEMBER 2020
OUR MISSION

The mission of the University of Alabama at Birmingham Department of Athletics is to compete at the highest level of intercollegiate athletics; ensure institutional control; promote and celebrate academic excellence; maintain fiscal responsibility; provide equitable opportunities for personal professional growth to our staff and student-athletes and promote a culture of sportsmanship and community service while instilling a sense of pride and loyalty in our community.

OUR ROLE TO REACH AND TEACH

UAB Athletics has a unique role to reach and teach. Every day we are guiding, inspiring and supporting our student-athletes to use their talents and gifts in their quests for excellence - academically, athletically and socially. We teach an array of lessons and skill sets that are not easily duplicated elsewhere on campus.
Dear Blazer Nation,

As we venture into 40 years of UAB Athletics, we continue to be committed to sustained excellence in every facet of our diverse mission which brings positive attention and pride to our university and community.

The Core Values for the UAB Department of Athletics are Graduate with Honors, Win Championships and Make a Difference. This comes with recruiting and retaining world-class athletes to our globally-recognized university, and it gives me great pride that this vision is being accomplished on a daily basis in our thriving city of Birmingham, Alabama.

No trophy, medal or accomplishment will ever be as significant as the degree our student-athletes will hoist above their heads as they walk across the stage in Bartow Arena at graduation. That will always be the main focus of our department. The maturation of the student-athlete begins in the classroom. Collectively, UAB Athletics is annually above a 3.0 combined GPA and at the top of the NCAA in APR and Graduation Success Rates. That is an impressive feat at a renowned university like UAB, and it is important for us to sustain our academic excellence.

There is a rich tradition at UAB, and winning on a national level is the expectation when donning the Green and Gold. We strive to give our student-athletes a first-class athletics experience which is why we are dedicated to building the best facilities in the country. Since 2015 there have been 11 completed facility upgrades, and there are many more on the horizon. It is essential to give our coaches and student-athletes the best advantage to compete at the highest level and it starts with facilities.

The success of UAB is critical to the economic impact it has on the state of Alabama, which is why it is so important for us to give back to our community. A big part of our student-athlete development is making sure our Blazers are affecting the lives of others in a positive manner, and that goes well beyond just their time on campus. Community service is an instrumental part of what we believe in here at UAB, and we are nationally recognized on an annual basis for their number of community service hours.

This is the most exciting time in UAB Athletics history and we are just scratching the surface of our potential as a department. Thank you for your unwavering support of UAB Athletics and believing in a Greater Birmingham. What is good for UAB is good for the city of Birmingham, the state of Alabama, and we will all rise together.

Go Blazers!

Mark Ingram
Director of Athletics
MISSION PRINCIPLE: GRADUATE WITH HONORS

Strategic Goal 1: Academic Achievement
Strategic Goal 2: Student-Athlete Development and Well Being
Strategic Goal 3: NCAA Compliance Focus
Strategic Goal 4: Alignment with University Mission

MISSION PRINCIPLE: WIN CHAMPIONSHIPS

Strategic Goal 5: Competitive Excellence and National Exposure
Strategic Goal 6: Enhanced External Relations
Strategic Goal 7: Emergence of Athletic Development

MISSION PRINCIPLE: MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Strategic Goal 8: Facility Master Planning
Strategic Goal 9: Diversity, Equity and Title IX
Strategic Goal 10: Responsible Fiscal Operations and Resource Management
STRATEGIC GOAL 1: ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Strategic Objective 1: Graduate 100% of All Student-Athletes within Five Years of Enrollment

- Activity 1: Engage coaches in supporting student-athletes academic successes.
- Activity 2: Improve academic advising of student-athletes.
- Activity 3: Continue to improve Graduation Success Rate (GSR): 2017 GSR was 83%, 5th in Conference USA.

Strategic Objective 2: Achieve and/or maintain a 970 or higher APR score for all sports.

- Activity 1: Continue to provide educational talks to properly inform student-athletes about what APR is and how their academic progress can impact the entire program.

Strategic Objective 3: Increase GSR from 83% to 85% by 2020.

- Activity 1: Increase communication between student-athletes and advisors to troubleshoot retention and graduation issues before they may occur.

Strategic Objective 4: Increase marketing and exposure of our high achieving and students that have graduated.

- Activity 1: Create display walls for ‘Top GPA’s’ and ‘Current UAB Graduates’ as a visual goal for all student-athletes.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: STUDENT ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT AND WELL BEING

Strategic Objective 1: Provide a comprehensive Student-Athlete Development Program.

- Activity 1: Continue to foster student led programming such as the Green and Golden Globes.
- Activity 2: Continue to mobilize student-athletes to keep involved in community service projects and increase total volunteer hours each year.
- Activity 3: Continue to develop comprehensive list with Athletic Communications, University Partners and Booster Blazers to compile all available awards. Implement a student-athlete awards committee to meet bi-annually to focus on nominating UAB student-athletes.
Strategic Objective 2: Encourage student-athletes to take advantage of campus resources.

- Activity 1: Continue to collaborate with campus officials/organizations.
- Activity 2: Continue to invite campus organizations to monthly SAAC meetings to increase awareness of campus resources.


- Activity 1: Hire a full-time dietician to work with Athletic staff to provide the best nutrition care possible and enhance the Blazer Fuel program.
- Activity 2: Begin planning design of a training table in the Bell Building.

Strategic Objective 4: Establish additional access points for further education in Mental Health Assessment.

- Activity 1: Continue to work with the Athletics Mental Health Team to keep up to date on current trends, proper education and evaluation in the area of mental health and stress management.
- Activity 2: Open communication lines with mental health treatment and streamline current system.
- Activity 3: Review guidelines and implement new process based on the “educate vs. medicate” approach.

Strategic Objective 5: Continue to provide enriched medical coverage for all sports.

- Activity 1: Use NATA’s recommendations as guidelines for appropriate medical coverage of intercollegiate athletics.
- Activity 2: Work with Athletic Business Office to identify opportunities to fund new full-time athletic training positions, while maintaining four intern positions, increasing overall staff size to 13.
- Activity 3: Evaluate possible external resources to fill appropriate medical positions.
Strategic Objective 6: Develop partnerships with university to improve sports medicine.

- Activity 1: Continue to build on current partnerships with University departments:
  - Radiology
  - Orthopedic specialists
  - Cardiology
  - Nutrition
  - Blazervision
  - Mental Health

Strategic Objective 7: Establish approved medical spending guidelines for sports medicine.

- Activity 1: Work with administration and Athletic business office to develop parameters for approved medical spending on: prescription medications, non-athletically related expenses and out of season illnesses.

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: NCAA COMPLIANCE FOCUS

Strategic Objective 1: Strengthen the Mechanisms of Institutional Control.

- Activity 1: Consider changing structure where the Athletics Compliance Office reports to the University Compliance Officer with a dotted reporting line to the University President.
- Activity 2: Annually present an athletics compliance report to the University Athletics Advisory Committee and other necessary entities.
- Activity 3: Request assisted oversight of student-athlete financial aid monitoring to the office of Financial Aid.
Strategic Objective 2: Strengthen Athletics Compliance Operations.

- Activity 1: Consider adding a fourth full-time Compliance Coordinator focused on rules education and Bylaws 11, 12 and 16.
- Activity 2: Search for and review opportunities to employ emerging technology to improve operation and service.
- Activity 3: Evaluate opportunities to augment the Athletics Compliance staff to ensure proper monitoring and education.
- Activity 4: Implement National Association for Athletics Compliance reasonable standards as they are published.

Strategic Objective 3: Assess Athletics Compliance Office Operations to Determine Areas In Need of Improvement.

- Activity 1: Continue to annually implement a compliance office customer service survey to be completed by coaches and administrative units in the athletics department.
- Activity 2: Facilitate a conference audit of Athletics Compliance Office operations per the C-USA strategic plan.
- Activity 3: Request Athletics Compliance Office operations review conducted by an external compliance consultant.

Strategic Objective 4: Continue to Build Relationships with Our Constituents and Help Prevent Potential Violations through In-Person Rules Education.

- Activity 1: Offer to provide team-specific NCAA rules education to student-athletes each month.
- Activity 2: Offer to provide NCAA rules education to sport-specific coaching staffs each month.
- Activity 3: Offer to provide NCAA rules education to boosters at various meetings.
- Activity 4: Provide NCAA initial-eligibility rules education to high schools in the Birmingham metro area upon request.
STRATEGIC GOAL 4: ALIGNMENT WITH THE UNIVERSITY MISSION

Strategic Objective 1: Align the Athletic strategic plan with the University strategic plan.

- Activity 1: Review the university strategic plan and continue to improve ways the Department of Athletics can uphold the University mission and while enhancing both plans.

Strategic Objective 2: Collaborate with University entities on academic and research endeavors.

- Activity 1: Collaborate and develop relationships and opportunities for Athletics to contribute to academic/research with the University.

STRATEGIC GOAL 5: COMPETITIVE EXCELLENCE AND NATIONAL EXPOSURE

Strategic Objective 1: Identify and secure conference affiliation opportunities for all sport programs sponsored.

- Activity 1: Women’s bowling currently does not have a conference. Athletics is currently petitioning conferences to gain conference competition experience and compete for automatic qualifier bid.

Strategic Objective 2: Annually finish in the top third of C-USA standings for the Learfield Director’s Cup.

- Activity 1: Identify a system to assess historical standings and performance—past winner vs. UAB standings; identify unit to lead this initiative.
- Activity 2: Develop benchmarks and timelines for improvement and review.
- Activity 3: Begin tracking Director’s Cup standings for annual review.

Strategic Objective 3: Collaboration to develop systematic branding

- Activity 1: Constant collaboration is needed through Marketing, Communications, Blazer Boosters, Head Coaches and IMG to ensure all are aware of branding theme and guidelines to ensure consistency of messages.
STRATEGIC GOAL 6: ENHANCED EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Strategic Objective 1: Aggressively increase ticket sales and continuously reinvest.
- Activity 1: Constantly invest in ticket sales staff.
- Activity 2: Seeking recommendation to hire full time ticket office assistant to assist with flow of day to day operations.
- Activity 3: Establish dynamic and comprehensive group sales effort.
- Activity 4: Expand selling window for Football and Men’s Basketball.
- Activity 5: Aggressively build Athletics database.
- Activity 6: Highlight Gold Card as emphasized product for Volleyball, Men’s Soccer, Women’s Soccer, Women’s Basketball, Baseball and Softball to drive attendance and revenue.
- Activity 7: Enhance communication efforts for donated ticket program.

Strategic Objective 2: Build the UAB Athletics Brand.
- Activity 1: Develop brand campaign that provides coaches, student-athletes, fans and other stakeholders with points of pride and look that will capture attention.
- Activity 2: Coordinate efforts between Athletics and campus communications to ensure messaging is part of institutional messaging; Reinforce UAB as Birmingham’s team.
- Activity 3: Drive revenue through ticket sales; Implement a year-round sales calendar.
- Activity 4: Coordinate digital and social campaigns designed to increase fan engagement with brand, including revised UABsports.com and mobile app.
- Activity 5: Enhance the game day experience for fans.
- Activity 6: Build on student engagement plan to boost student attendance.

Strategic Objective 3: Increase licensing and trademarks program with University Relations team.
- Activity 1: Incrementally increase licensing revenues to $200K by 2020.
- Activity 2: Increase retailer portfolio on local, regional and national level.
- Activity 3: Develop institutional policies and procedures for UAB trademarks.
- Activity 4: Improve inventory response time.
Strategic Objective 4: Drive revenue through Blazer IMG Sports Marketing (Multi-Media Rights Partnership).

- Activity 1: Identify opportunities to increase gross revenues with the goal of being a $2M property by the completion of the 2017-18 contract year.
- Activity 2: Continue to build a high-performing team with collaboration, accountability and effective prospecting
- Activity 3: Incorporate new sales pitches to be no less than a 3 year term.
- Activity 4: Seek opportunities to expand and improve the reach of the UAB Radio Network in Birmingham and other key markets.

Strategic Objective 5: Continuously promote UAB Athletics.

- Activity 1: Promote the successes of UAB Athletics, our coaches, student-athletes in competition and in the classroom.
- Activity 2: Continue to increase the UAB Athletics footprint by capitalizing on the momentum the department has gained through its traction, specifically with the return of UAB Football.
- Activity 3: Create a public relations strategy. Capture human interest stories from those closest to the program to infuse the Birmingham community with UAB Athletics.
- Activity 4: Develop initiatives to maximize revenue across auxiliary marketing areas, including social media, website and engagement opportunities
- Activity 5: Keep look and content of uabsports.com fresh
- Activity 6: Work in conjunction with administration and coaches to continue to increase social and digital presence. Develop a comprehensive social media style guide to establish consistent message.
STRATEGIC GOAL 7: EMERGENCE OF ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT

Strategic Objective 1: Enhance Blazer Booster experience.

- Activity 1: Launch multi-year membership campaign with eventual goal of achieving 5,000 donors.
- Activity 2: Finish football operational facility fundraising: $1.2 million needed; $1.4 million for additional grass fields.
- Activity 3: Successfully attain gift commitments of $6 million for the basketball practice facility.
- Activity 4: Successfully attain gift commitments of $4 million for baseball & softball clubhouse.
- Activity 5: Transition to UAB Athletics Foundation beginning January 2018.
- Activity 6: Refresh Blazer Boosters brand and tell our story as to what our donors are impacting.
- Activity 7: Utilize coaches in each sport as brand ambassadors and create individuals and companies who can assist in fundraising efforts.
- Activity 8: Evaluate all annual benefits (including seating and parking) to plan for future improvements and increase revenue opportunities.
- Activity 9: Introduce intentional push for UAB Football Excellence Fund.
- Activity 10: Create streamlined fulfillment for Ever Loyal Society and build value in membership through events and recognition.

STRATEGIC GOAL 8: FACILITY MASTER PLANNING

Strategic Objective 1: Establish a Dedicated Budget for Facility Maintenance.

- Activity 1: Currently developing a process to schedule routine maintenance (sod work at fields, painting of interior and exterior areas, carpet for interior areas, etc.)
- Activity 2: Prioritize and sequence projects identified as part of Athletic Facilities Master Plan.
- Activity 3: Continue to gain feedback for suggested facility upgrades, maintenance and new facility ideas.
Strategic Objective 2: Identify spaces to reconfigure or renovate for future growth.

- Activity 1: Meet with necessary University administrative representatives outside of Athletics to educate them regarding the needs for these spaces; finalize fundraising schedule to fund project.
- Activity 2: Acquire full-time use and supervision of Wallace Gym; Evaluate and identify operating costs relative to Wallace Gym facility (pool maintenance, court maintenance, etc.).
- Activity 4: Assist other campus units in identifying new spaces to meet needs.
- Activity 5: Assess layout of Bell Building to convert into a training table option for student-athletes.
- Activity 6: Assess options to renovate the original Ullman School.
- Activity 7: Demolish Food Fair, 711 Building, Dowdy Building and Ullman West.

STRATEGIC GOAL 9: DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND TITLE IX

Strategic Objective 1: Educate Athletics staff, Coaches and Student-Athletes on Diversity and Inclusion, Equity and Title IX.

- Activity 1: Provide diversity and inclusion, Title IX updates to the Athletics Advisory Committee annually.
- Activity 2: Secure and/or identify funding sources to fully implement diversity inclusion initiatives.
- Activity 3: Improve and develop programming to enhance diverse populations and minority interest groups.
- Activity 4: Attend NCAA inclusion seminars to develop best practices to implement within UAB Athletics.

Strategic Objective 2: Develop and Implement Title IX Compliance Plan for Athletics Department.

- Activity 1: Develop a Title IX Compliance Committee.
- Activity 2: Conduct internal Title IX review to determine and track proportionally.

Strategic Objective 3: NCAA Policy of Sexual Violence.

- Activity 1: Review plan with Title IX committee to adhere to NCAA certification guidelines.
- Activity 2: Evaluate education and tracking method for student-athletes, staff and coaches.
STRATEGIC GOAL 10: RESPONSIBLE FISCAL OPERATIONS AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Strategic Objective 1: Effective monitoring and control for expenses and budget.
- Activity 1: Develop best practices to identify efficiencies in team travel, equipment purchasing and vendor services.
- Activity 2: Plan effective use of restricted funds including: Athletics Foundation, NCAA grant funds etc.
- Activity 3: Develop a five-year budget projection and update annually.

Strategic Objective 2: Comply with Federal and State tax laws to eliminate risk of penalties, fines, or damage to the University’s reputation.
- Activity 1: Athletic Business Office will continue to monitor all merchandise sales that may occur to ensure proper sales taxes are applied. NCAA event sales are staffed through Athletic Business Office.

Strategic Objective 3: Develop positive workforce that is service-oriented, effective and efficient.
- Activity 1: Update departmental organizational structure and individual job duties to maximize best work productivity.
- Activity 2: Promote a culture of personal accountability, integrity and trust.
- Activity 3: Develop a crisis plan for unexpected events outside of University unexpected events.
- Activity 4: Executive staff will review updated weather policy to distribute and implement with athletic staff.
Ray L. Watts, M.D., UAB’s seventh president, has demonstrated visionary leadership in education, research and clinical care throughout his career.

A Birmingham native and graduate of West End High School, Dr. Watts earned a bachelor’s degree in engineering at UAB in 1976. The collaborations he had with biomedical engineering students as an undergraduate inspired him to expand his career horizons and, four years later, he graduated from Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis as valedictorian of his class.

Dr. Watts completed a neurology residency, medical internship, and clinical fellowships at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital, followed by a two-year medical staff fellowship at the National Institutes of Health. Before returning to UAB in 2003, he was part of a team that helped to create an internationally renowned research and clinical center for Parkinson’s disease and other movement disorders at Emory University in Atlanta.

At UAB, Dr. Watts served as the John N. Whitaker Professor and Chairman of the Department of Neurology. There he led the development of an interdisciplinary research program aimed at translating scientific breakthroughs into promising new therapies for neurodegenerative diseases and played a key role in the establishment of the UAB Comprehensive Neuroscience Center. He also was named president of the University of Alabama Health Services Foundation.

In 2010, Dr. Watts accepted the position of Senior Vice President and Dean of the School of Medicine at UAB, and later was named to the James C. Lee Jr. Endowed Chair. As dean, Dr. Watts – in partnership with UAB Health System and Health Services Foundation leaders – initiated the AMC21 comprehensive strategic plan, encompassing education, research, clinical care and primary care. AMC21 aims to make UAB “the preferred academic medical center of the 21st century,” and has led to the recruitment of outstanding faculty, the launch of programs to accelerate research and drug discovery, and the development of a third regional medical campus in Montgomery, among other successes. He has been tireless in his efforts to enhance medical student training—from increasing available scholarships to supporting Equal Access Birmingham, a volunteer organization in which students provide care to underserved patients—and to foster stronger relationships with medical alumni throughout the state.

“People want to invest in the future—in solutions that will have a real impact on our health, education and our economy,” Dr. Watts has said. “So the state and community want us to develop our ideas and capitalize on opportunities to lead. UAB can be one of the most dynamic and productive universities of the 21st century, and that is our vision.”

Dr. Watts and his wife Nancy, who worked at UAB as a nurse before retiring, have five grown children.
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