Growing UVU through Athletics
-What the UVU Community Can Do to Help-
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UVU is facing a slight identity crisis. We may still be a relatively young university when it comes to athletics, but we’re the largest provider of undergraduate education and the second-largest public institution in Utah. And yet, our weak school spirit for athletics may be holding us back from knowing who we are and who we can become.

Think about the number of BYU decals you see on the backs of cars around Utah Valley. Or the number of people out and about sporting BYU or U-of-U apparel, even on UVU campus! It’s probably fair to say that Utah’s other leading universities have done a better job establishing their school pride and support. So where does that level of identity and school spirit come from? Where is UVU falling short? Evidence points to the support of athletics.

Maybe you’re not really into sports? That’s fine. But if you’re into UVU, you may want to consider the following:

A school that recently overcame their own identity crisis, thanks to athletic performance, is Ft. Myers’ Florida Gulf Coast University. FGCU recently captivated a national audience after an amazing season in Men’s Basketball. Their run in the 2013 NCAA Men’s Division 1 Basketball Tournament put them on the map after defeating Georgetown and San Diego on their path to the Sweet 16. As an underdog new to Division 1 status, their victories and unique playing style earned Fort Myers a famous nickname: ‘Dunk City’.

Thanks to media coverage, along with a student-made YouTube video that reached over 750,000 views, attention for the school exploded. Their website received hundreds of thousands of hits, including international inquiries. Game nights became jam-packed with fans, local stores began carrying FGCU apparel, boasting signs that read, “Home of Dunk City”, and the entire region swelled with pride.

But perhaps the clearest evidence of the powerful and lucrative nature of FGCU’s ‘brand’ was a 35.4% increase in freshman applications following the team’s spectacular season. *(Interesting tidbit: Our Men’s team actually beat FGCU in 2004.)* This phenomenon— when success in college sports brings increased exposure and prominence to a university— is known as the “Flutie Effect” (named after Boston College’s Doug Flutie, whose Hail Mary pass in the 1984 game against Miami won them a huge increase in applications the following year).

Other schools that have experienced the Flutie Effect, to name a few, include:
- Appalachian State University, Football 2007- 17% increase in applicants, 24% increase in attendance, and a 73% boost in licensing royalties.
- Boise State University, Football 2007- 135% increase in online inquiries, tenfold increase in grad school application inquiries, and an all-time high enrollment of 19,000 students the following Fall semester.
- Butler University, Basketball 2010 and 2011- News coverage of their NCAA championship game resulted in publicity worth $1.2 billion. Applications rose by 41% after their 2010 appearance.

From the examples of FGCU and other universities we begin to see not only the undeniable power of college athletics, but proof of the link between athletic achievement and academic interest.

Athletics earn prestige and garner media spotlight like few other school accomplishments can. While it’s true that UVU’s teams already have a lot to brag about, it obviously takes more than just athletic achievement to get people excited about UVU.
Did you know?

- Our Baseball team had one of the longest winning streaks in Division 1 NCAA history in 2012. Two more wins to their 32 game winning streak would have tied them for the all-time record.
- We currently have the only Division 1 Men's Soccer program in the state. This represents a unique opportunity for UVU, as soccer in Utah continues to grow in popularity (in the 2011-12 season alone there were well over 40,000 youth soccer registrants).
- We also have Utah's only NCAA Division 1 Wrestling program.
- Women's Basketball has been leading the nation in GPA. They've ranked #1 twice in the past 4 years, beating out Stanford and Harvard.
- Men's Basketball is currently #1 in the WAC at 9 and 2!

Our teams’ achievements are already worthy of the kind of publicity we’re talking about. What’s missing from the equation is a community saturated with Wolverine pride. UVU’s student-athletes are our most valuable asset for branding a good name for UVU on a state and national level, and that role deserves the support of students, faculty, staff, and community members. Greater recognition brings in more students, which translates into benefits for all members of the UVU Community.

Some may prefer to show their support by attending events put on by the School of the Arts, Technology and Computing, the School of Business, or others. That’s awesome! Every student deserves our support. But where we really need to step it up at this point in time is in our attendance at athletic events and in the strength of our Wolverine pride— not only to show support for our student-athletes, but because the fact remains that nothing catches national news and impacts enrollment like athletics.

Our athletes are already doing their part to bring recognition to UVU, so What Can WE Do?

1. Go to the games and cheer on our teams! Heavy fan support can only improve our athletes’ morale. Keep in mind that staff get into games FOR FREE, so UVU game nights can be a fun and affordable night out for you and your family or friends.


3. Show your pride during the workday. Wear your UVU-Green apparel, especially on Wolverine Wednesdays or game days, and get your hands on some free team posters to color up your work area (contact Athletic Marketing, ext. 8989, for posters).

4. Wear your Wolverine pride inside and out. Staff can have a huge influence on students, especially if you work with them directly. We want our Wolverine pride to be apparent and infectious. What we don’t want is for students to see another university’s apparel on our Wolverine-Green Campus.

Students are the ones who keep us in business. Here at UVU, not all of our students are athletes, but all of our athletes are students, and they deserve to feel our support pouring out from a full, enthusiastic stadium as they work hard to bring recognition to our school. By offering our support, we’re contributing to the growth of our university, our jobs, and the strength of the UVU brand. We can make this kind of growth possible just by showing up and having fun!

So let’s start seeing more UVU decals and apparel popping up around campus. Let’s feel more of that Wolverine-Green pride spreading across the region. Remember— It all has to start right here in the Wolverines’ den— in your offices, classrooms, and up and down the halls of Utah Valley University!

Go Wolverines!