Greening Indiana University Athletics

Interim Report

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# Table of Contents

- Introduction 2
- Methods 3
- Progress 4
- Recommendations 6
- Calendar 8
Introduction

A well-executed sporting event utilizes a series of well-coordinated systems for transportation, administration, lighting, building efficiency, food procurement, and waste management. Thus, the “Greening IU Athletics” project has been a synergy between assessing the current practices within IU Athletics and implementing a pilot program to advance those practices. The basis for a solid foundation, on which to expand practices to conserve resources and reduce the carbon footprint of the department, was established through department-wide interviews, data analysis, and interviews with other collegiate athletic departments.

Educating the Athletics’ staff, the volunteers assisting with the initiative, and the community is crucial to the success of “greening” the department. While Indiana University Athletics has implemented “greener” practices (e.g., local produce in Athletic dining, occupancy sensors in newer buildings, recycled content of office paper, etc.), the department has challenges ahead if they intend on being the “greenest” Athletics department in the Big Ten Conference. On a positive note, individuals within Athletics are receptive to issues relating to sustainability. As with any change, transition takes time. That said, the atmosphere within Athletics is conducive to sustainability-related progress.

Lastly, if Indiana University Athletics continues its push to be “greener,” with forward thinking, IU has the potential to be a long-term model for the Big Ten. By drawing on the leadership of sustainability-minded collegiate programs - University of Florida, University of Colorado-Boulder, and the University of California-Davis - IU can gain a better understanding of the benefits of sustainable systems and tailor “green” practices that aid the department, the university, and the Bloomington community.
Methods

My internship began in November of 2009 with a meeting between my mentor, Chris Reynolds, the Senior Associate Athletic Director, and myself. In the initial meeting, Mr. Reynolds expressed the department’s desire to be “greener,” and to move forward by addressing some “low-hanging fruit.” He stressed the role of the athletics department on campus. We both agreed that our first step should be to establish a foundation on which to build our green initiative. We had to gain a better understanding of current procedures and attitudes within the Indiana University Athletics department, the Big Ten Conference, and collegiate athletics as a whole. In order to construct this foundation a preliminary assessment of the department needed to be completed.

I researched sustainability frameworks in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), and located the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education’s (AASHE) 2009 Collegiate Athletic Department Sustainability Survey Report. Since Indiana University participated in the survey, I felt this was a natural starting point for my inquiry into current practices within the department. I interviewed staff members in the department to gain a better understanding of department-wide knowledge of sustainable systems, habits related to sustainability, and departmental plans to be “greener.”

We discussed the prospects of “green” sporting events, and agreed on a schedule to implement the department’s ambitious goals. My mentor and I agreed to meet every other week, or as necessary, to monitor my progress and consider alternative courses of action.

During my research for the preliminary assessment, it became increasingly evident that completing a comprehensive assessment that adhered to my original
timeline, a goal I originally set for completion by the end of the spring semester of 2010, was not attainable given the sheer magnitude of the department. While conducting interviews in the various departments within IU Athletics, a clearer picture of the individuals and motivations involved informed me of the challenges to and the attainability of my goals. Indeed, my work would be a careful balance between education, action, and research.

Progress

During my six months as an intern, the Athletics department has made significant progress – the kind of progress that can be built upon. The project has been a learning experience for all involved, including myself. We have accomplished many firsts:

- A preliminary assessment, which will serve as a foundation for the later comprehensive assessment, of current practices in the department was completed in February 2010

- The first-ever Greening Cream & Crimson initiative was coined on February 09, 2010
• The first-ever Greening Cream & Crimson bimonthly newsletter, initially planned as an internal sustainability-related educational piece (that now will be expanded and offered to the public) was introduced to the staff on April 16, 2010

• The Athletics Green Team, a diverse twenty-member group with representatives from each area within Athletics dedicated to advancing the green practices of the department, was assembled for their inaugural meeting on March 26, 2010

• As a part of this initiative, student-volunteers were trained for and carried out the first carbon neutral football game in Indiana University history on April 17, 2010. At the event, 70 volunteers collected nearly 1,100 pounds of recycling. Bicycle valet, cellular phone recycling, and education of fans in the tailgate area were also piloted

While the IU Athletics Department is excited about expansion of their “green” practices, in the beginning there was some understandable hesitancy. As said before, change takes time. With each success, whether it is in an individual staff member’s understanding of the three core components of sustainability or the
concept of carbon neutrality, the fans involvement in game-day recycling, or the campus partnerships that are being fostered because of this initiative, the vision of a “greener” Athletics department becomes reality.

Recommendations

With any first-time event there are bound to be areas in need of improvement. This is certainly true of the green, Greening Cream and Crimson initiative piloted on April 17th. For future events, a designated location with appropriate volunteer-related signage will help ease confusion for the fans and volunteers. In addition, the pre-arranged location of the bicycle valet area was inappropriate for the spring game. Alternatives will be investigated for future games at Memorial Stadium.

Clarity needs to be provided to volunteers during check-in on the specifics of recyclable content. Tasks and duties should be better defined to avoid volunteer confusion and lethargy. Furthermore, shifts could be shortened for the benefit of the hardworking volunteers.

Recommendations specific to the pilot game were provided via an online post-game volunteer survey. Adjustments that can be made for the April 27th green soccer game will be implemented to enhance the volunteer experience.

For areas unrelated to game-day events, thorough interviews with each member of the Green Team should be conducted to gain a better understanding of departmental priorities related to sustainability. These informational sessions should align with sustainability frameworks already being utilized by the NCAA. This will not only benefit communication between Green Team members but it will provide crucial content to the comprehensive assessment scheduled for completion in the
summer of 2010. It is possible that these interviews could be conducted during the
time when collection of information for building occupancy times occurs (now
completed for Memorial Stadium and Assembly Hall, but still lacking completion for
all facilities).

Since education is crucial to the success of this initiative, continued examples from
other universities will provide much-needed benchmarks whereby IU Athletics can
tailor green departmental practices.

One pressing example of education that should be implemented as soon as
possible is the interactive web link that has been planned for Athletics' website.
The content needs to be agreed upon prior to the end of the spring semester 2010,
and the department should unveil the link shortly thereafter.
Calendar

26.April.2010  Occupancy results for Assembly Hall & Memorial Stadium finalized

27.April.2010  Men's green soccer game (pilot)

01.May.2010  Hoosier-to-Hoosier collection

05.May.2010  Website content completed

21.May.2010  Occupancy results for all facilities

18.June.2010  Completion of 2nd newsletter

02.July.2010  Game-day planning for green regular-season football game

06.August.2010  Long-term plan for Athletics related to sustainability

13.August.2010  Comprehensive Assessment completed

21.August.2010  Hoosier-to-Hoosier community sale

02.September.2010  First-ever regular-season green game (vs. Towson)

Interim Report  April 2010