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Garden City Discontinues Men's Soccer

GCCC MAKES OFFICIAL DECISION TO DISCONTINUE MEN'S SOCCER TEAM

President also announces plan to expand participation opportunities through intramurals

Garden City Community College will proceed with a plan to discontinue the intercollegiate soccer program for men, and expand intramural opportunities in soccer for the benefit of local and area students who want to participate in the sport.

Dr. Herbert Swender, president, announced the decision this afternoon.

"We have put a lot of time into reviewing the continuation of men's soccer, both before and after last week's meeting of the GCCC Board of Trustees," Swender said. "I appreciate and respect the input from every perspective that has come from students and the community, and I believe this is the right course of action for Garden City Community College."

A proposal to conclude the intercollegiate soccer program for men drew a crowd, primarily of college and high school students, to the May 11 meeting of the GCCC Board of Trustees. However, Dr. Bill Clifford, board chairman, explained at the end of the discussion that the trustees wouldn't be voting on the plan. Under the policy governance system used by the board, Clifford noted, the president has the authority to initiate or discontinue programs, as long as he considers their cost-effectiveness and overall value. After the meeting, Swender said he would make an official decision and announcement this week.

"Our main reasons for reaching this conclusion involve the need to be frugal with the finite resources that are available to us, as well as the goal of creating a wider avenue for soccer participation by local and area students," Swender said.

LOCAL PARTICIPATION

"I see this not just as a way to hold down our costs in athletics, but also as a way to elevate local opportunities for involvement in soccer," the president said. "There is a lot of passion for soccer at the community level throughout Garden City, and this just dovetails with that, because we are committing to expanding our intramural sports opportunities this fall, with a strong emphasis on soccer.

GCCC first operated an intercollegiate soccer program in 1990-1993, and launched the present program in 2005, with the goal of involving players from Garden City and Southwest Kansas. However, local and area participation has been limited. Out of 24 players on the team at the beginning of the 2010 season, just three came from Southwest Kansas. In 2005 when the current program began, seven Garden City High School graduates played on the men's team, and since that time the annual number has ranged from zero to a maximum of three. Game attendance has been sparse too.

"The men's soccer team has achieved some outstanding results on the field," Swender said, "but with participation at that level, I cannot honestly call it a program that serves a local population."

"With a strong intramural program, we can offer extensive opportunities for involvement in soccer

by local and regional players," Swender said, "and it won't come with the restrictions for 2012 that we'll see in NJCAA intercollegiate competition." This will be a soccer playing opportunity that caters to Southwest Kansas students."

COST SAVINGS AND TIMING

In terms of reducing athletic expenditures, the president said he and his cabinet considered recommendations from the GCCC Athletic Department. The soccer program costs approximately $60,000 per year, including a full-time coaching salary, plus travel expenses.

Ending the program will save not only those costs, but also reduce athletic insurance expenses, ease the demand on the training room and athletic training support, simplify facility scheduling, and scale back on dollars used for team recruitment.

He added that the change was considered only after the resignation of Men's Soccer Coach Steve Gorton, who left GCCC to accept a Division I coaching position out of state.

Plans call for the continuation of intercollegiate soccer for women, as well as the other athletic endeavors GCCC operates, including basketball, cross country, track, rodeo, softball and volleyball for women; as well as basketball, cross country, track, rodeo, baseball and football for men.

Steve Quackenbush

GCCC