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THE LIONS' PRIDE
MEDIA GROUP



“Operational Changes”: Saint Leo University announces cuts to staff, faculty, academics, and athletics programs

Alora Peters

Editor-in-Chief

“It will not go down as one of the greatest weeks in Saint Leo history.”

Members of the Saint Leo University community cannot help but agree with Fran Reidy, the vice president of athletics, recreation, and wellness: the announcement is far from being one of Saint Leo’s better moments, as community-wide shock followed in the wake of a Feb. 16 press release.

In the release, Saint Leo announced a series of changes and cuts to various programs in all areas of collegiate life, including academics, athletics, and student activities.

“People have lost their jobs,” said Reidy. “Student-athletes feel disenfranchised. It’s the last thing that anybody wanted to happen.”

Notably, the university plans to “discontinue operations” at eight of its 16 satellite campuses. Students attending the affected education centers – located in Charleston, S.C.; Joint Base Charleston-Naval Weapons Station, S.C.; Columbus, Miss.; Corpus Christi, Texas; Jacksonville, Fla.;

Lake City, Fla.; Ocala, Fla.; and Mayport, Fla. – will transition to the WorldWide online program.

Additionally, three degree programs will be eventually discontinued: the Bachelor of Arts in International Hospitality, the Bachelor of Arts in Human Services, and the Master of Science in Human Services.

Mariana Navarrete, a Saint Leo alumna who graduated in 2022, stated that she was drawn to the university because of her interest in the Bachelor of Arts in Global Studies – another recently discontinued program.

“They cut my major before I graduated,” said Navarrete. “That was kind of a tipping point ... I literally came to Saint Leo to swim and study that specific major.”

Navarrete was told that she would still be able to graduate with her chosen degree, a similar experience to the students in the three soon-to-be-discontinued programs. However, due to the lack of available global studies courses, her classes were largely drawn from other departments, such as political science, sociology, history, and economics.

“It changed all of my classes,” said Navarrete. “It was very shocking.”

In conjunction with the academic program changes and center closures, the Feb. 16 press release also noted that, “a total of 111 faculty and staff positions were eliminated.”

Staff positions were eliminated in a variety of areas – ranging from student success to military resources to student club management – and faculty positions were ended in programs experiencing low enrollment among students, including all non-English language programs.

Perhaps the most widely discussed notice in this press release was the announcement that six of Saint Leo’s 23 NCAA Division II athletic teams would be cut at the conclusion of their respective seasons.

Confusion and panic ensued following the release, as athletes and other members of the Saint Leo community speculated which teams would be discontinued. Many were upset the university disseminated this information online and through social media before having a conversation with the affected athletic teams.

“When I saw that they just posted the article without even telling the athletes ... that was very unprofessional, I think,” said Navarrete, who competed on the women’s swim team during her time at Saint Leo. “The coach had no clue, and the athletes even less.”

Graduates like Navarrete also noted the stress that many Saint Leo athletes must have felt receiving the news in the midst of competitions over the weekend.

“I couldn’t imagine [being] in the position of those athletes and just having that news of ‘My program is being cut’ ... because of operational issues that are not their fault,” Navarrete said. “I think a lot of athletes feel powerless about the decision.”

While the communication of the teams’ upcoming discontinuation was problematic, other factors complicated the matter.

The disparity between the initial press release and the revelation of the affected teams stemmed from the timing of changes affecting other departments and areas of the university.

“Part of the challenge was that there were some things in

Newsroom

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“Operational Changes,” continued

motion with the whole university,” said Reidy. “Our value of Integrity said we needed to announce all of the plans in the initial announcement ... There were some pieces to the equation besides the athletic piece. There were people traveling to the centers to tell people [about the closures].”

Many affected staff positions were eliminated immediately on Feb. 16. However, the fact that many of the affected teams were travelling and competing at this time meant that it was impossible for a face-to-face conversation between the university and the athletes.

“It left some teams that were on the road in a bad situation ... I still think calling teams up while they were on the road and telling them would have been just as bad,” said Reidy. “If we didn’t announce anything about athletics in the initial announcement, but came back this week and said, ‘Oh, by the way, we forgot something in that,’ people would have said we weren’t transparent from the beginning.”

Additionally, the timing of the final vote of the Board of Trustees left little time for advance communication.

“The Administration and the Board of Trustees ... really, really debated this question,” said Reidy. “Some of the very final decisions were not reached until last Wednesday [Feb. 15], less than 24 hours before the announcement.”

On Feb. 21, five days following the initial press release, Saint Leo released the statement officially announcing which six teams would be cut at the conclusion of the spring season: the men’s and women’s track and field, cross-country, and swim teams.

Following this second announcement, many student athletes expressed concerns, hurt, and frustration, as reported in interviews with major news outlets, such as ABC Action News and Fox 13.

Additionally, members of the Saint Leo community were shocked to hear that these particular teams were cut, given the amount of success seen in Saint Leo’s track, cross-country, and swim teams. Notably, the men’s cross-country

team has brought home four SSC championship titles, and the women’s cross-country team brought home three. The men’s swim team holds the university record for most All-Americans, with a total of 25; the women’s swim team tied for second place, with a total of 13 All-Americans. Furthermore, each of these four teams boast a significant number of NCAA championship appearances, with women’s cross-country making six, men’s cross-country making seven, men’s swim making 11, and women’s swim making 12.

For Navarrete, it was sad and frustrating to see her team and fellow swimmers succeed and continually pursue athletic excellence without much funding from the university or recognition from other students, especially in comparison with other athletic teams on campus.

“I knew they were going to cut the program at some point,” said Navarrete. “That’s why I left and graduated early ... It was very

sad. [Saint Leo] recruited amazing swimmers.”

To lose talented student-athletes is what has led many members of the Saint Leo athletics community to feel that the decision to cut these specific six teams was “personal.”

through Saint Leo’s education centers and WorldWide online program – means that every area of collegiate life at Saint Leo will suffer from a decreased budget.

“In Division II, athletics does not make money. So, it becomes a question of, ‘what is acceptable

“We built this thing once. We’re going to try to do it again.”

-Fran Reidy, vice president of athletics, recreation, and wellness

“I want people to realize that it’s not as cut and dry as we would like,” said Reidy. “I don’t want to pit teams against each other: ‘Why my team and not that team?’ We have the right people here ... That’s what makes this very difficult: wonderful coaches, wonderful student-athletes. [It’s] through no fault of their own that our enrollment has dipped.”

Lack of funding coming from lack of enrollment – particularly from the decrease in enrollment

for our institution to spend on athletics?” said Reidy. “We had a number that we had to meet.”

A decrease in budget given to the athletics department meant reductions in scholarships, salaries, staffing, and teams.

“There was great debate over ‘how many programs?’” said Reidy, explaining that the initial projection of cuts into the athletics department would have resulted in the loss of even more teams.



Photo by Alora Peters

The headline of the university’s Feb. 16 press release read, “Saint Leo University Streamlines for Growth, Prepares for Future.” Many members of the Saint Leo community were initially confused by the emotional reactions to the release on social media, until they began to read beyond the title.

“Operational Changes,” continued

“The original number that we were given to target would have [resulted in] far more than six,” he said.

The main expense currently incurred by the athletics department is scholarships.

“Our biggest number is in scholarships,” said Reidy. “A scholarship is worth around \$40,000. So, if a team has three scholarships, that’s \$120,000 right there.”

Even with the valiant efforts of Saint Leo’s Lions to fundraise for their teams, it would be nearly impossible for a team to sustain itself without aid from the university.

“When you say that a program with scholarships, and coaches, and coaches’ benefits, is \$400,000-500,000, that’s a lot for a team to think they are going to raise every year in order to fund their program,” said Reidy. “Certainly, fundraising is needed by everybody. All of the teams do it. All of the teams are very good at it. But, if we were expected to fundraise all of the money needed to run all of the teams ... Impossible.”

Consequently, even returning athletic teams will feel the effects of the budget restraints in the future, with less money available from the university for athletic scholarships.

“This year, we had almost \$9 million in financial aid go to student athletes,” said Reidy.

Additionally, teams’ operational budgets – which were significantly reduced last year – will remain at these reduced levels for the time being.

Another factor that went into the process of deciding which athletic programs to cut was the quality of the athletics facilities available.

“The reality is that our swimming pool is 53 years old and we never know from one day to the next if it is going to be okay,” said Reidy. “If that pool became unusable in the middle of a season, that would be a problem.”

Reidy said that the university has discussed the possibility of building an aquatic center in conjunction with various entities in Pasco County – including the school board, county commissioners, and parks and recreation – in order to make a new pool possible for the

Saint Leo athletes.

“It was going to be about \$3 million to renovate our pool,” Reidy said.

Additionally, Saint Leo does not currently have a stadium or designated practice arena for its track and field teams. The result is that the university is already unable to provide for these athletes the highest quality training experience and equipment.

If Saint Leo is able to return to its former budget and address these lacking areas, the athletics department would hope to restore the men’s and women’s swim, track and field, and cross-country teams to the roster.

Reidy stated that, when he first started working at Saint Leo over 25 years ago, the university only had 10 sports.

“The way that it was built up last time was, as the school did better, each area of the university grew and prospered,” he said. “We built this thing once. We’re going to try to do it again.”

In the meantime, the university hopes to provide the directly affected athletes with as many resources as possible during this transition period.

“There is a number out there, that 72 athletes were impacted,” said Reidy. “Twenty-four are graduating, so the number is more like 48. About half of them are on scholarship, and half are not on scholarship.”

Students with athletic scholarships on the affected teams who choose to remain at Saint Leo will be able to retain their athletic scholarship for one year, up to tuition. The intent is to allow junior and senior athletes to be able to finish their education at Saint Leo; additionally, freshman and sophomores who are unable to transfer to another institution for the 2023-2024 academic year would be provided with more time to search for an alternative.

Additionally, Saint Leo wants to take advantage of all of the construction and development taking place around University Campus to generate more revenue for the athletic programs. Things like sponsorships, advertisements,



The operational changes coming to Saint Leo University illustrate the interconnection among all departments of the university. As enrollment and retention of students – particularly WorldWide and Education Center students – experience a decrease in numbers, other areas of the university also suffer decreases: in program availability, course offerings, staffing, and athletics teams.

and rentals of Saint Leo’s fields and facilities are all being considered as sources of revenue generation.

“We do have great facilities here, so I think we need to take advantage of that,” said Reidy. “If we could make ... \$500,000 through field rentals, that would be huge.”

Furthermore, with limited athletic scholarships available, the university hopes to offer more in terms of competitive club sports in order to continue offering athletic experiences, provide opportunities for connection, and increase enrollment and retention of students.

Currently, a proposal for a rugby club team is in the works. Club soccer teams for men and women are also in discussion. Saint Leo has already experienced success with its sporting clays team and its ice hockey team.

Aside from rebuilding financially, one of the more difficult issues the university will need to grapple with, moving forward, is maintaining positive relations with members of the Saint Leo community.

Navarrete stated that, given everything that has happened in the past year since her graduation,

returning to Saint Leo will be very difficult for her.

“I just can’t process those things,” she said. “Most of my time, I was at the pool ... The reason I would have come back is literally to watch swim meets, and see how the team was evolving.”

Nonetheless, alumni like Navarrete do hope that students currently facing this difficult situation maintain a hopeful and optimistic attitude.

“Things happen for a reason. Maybe not the best reason,” said Navarrete. “But don’t drown in sadness ... Look for options. Everything will fall into place. Don’t be afraid of change ... People will hit you with things that are not in your control, and you will just need to adapt to it.”

Likewise, Reidy hopes that the university will rally, recover, and learn from what happened.

“We’ve overcome challenges before at Saint Leo,” said Reidy. “We’re a gritty group, and we have some really smart people, and we’re going to find a way to get through this, and build our athletic program back ... I’m confident that we can find a path forward.”



Saint Leo Lions react following discontinuance of six athletic teams

Arthur Cosson
Social Media Manager

On Monday, Feb. 20, the Vice President of Athletics at Saint Leo University, Fran Reidy, had the hard task of announcing that, in order to resolve financial problems, no less than 70 student-athletes and five coaches in their athletic programs would be cut for the next season. The men's and women's Swimming, Cross-Country, and Track and Field programs, which represent six out of the 23 NCAA athletic programs at Saint Leo, will all be discontinued at the close of the season.

Student-athletes and coaches are impacted in many ways. However, how the university decided to communicate and address these announcements has not been helpful for the affected students and staff.

On Thursday, Feb. 16, the whole university received an email indicating that changes have been decided following a vote of the Board of Trustees to "prepare for the future." One paragraph was dedicated to the athletic announcement and preceded by a simple green "validated" emoji, as if it was a positive thing for the University.

The statement read: "Six intercollegiate athletic programs will be discontinued at the conclusion of their seasons. Since there are currently four teams on the road competing, and another five traveling this weekend, discussions will

occur with the affected programs and the athletic community once all teams return to campus. We will communicate the programs once we have informed and supported the student-athletes impacted."

Teams such as tennis or swimming were competing at the national or conference level at the time the email was sent out. Notably, this same weekend, men's tennis won the first national title in program history. Swimming qualified in both relays and individuals for the highest NCAA DII level and won several medals during the Sunshine State Conference Championship.

However, we cannot say that this email has not impacted the mental health of the Lions.

Hugo Chopineau, a senior and captain of the swimming team at Saint Leo, reported that the whole team was crying when the announcement was made, even though no one knew which programs were impacted at this moment. A climate of fear had already been established for the weekend.

"Personally, when I heard the news that six sports programs were being cut, I was in the conference championship, which was not ideal for staying focused on the competition," said Nino Viallon, a freshman on the swimming team.

It was only in the following week that Reidy convened the swimming teams at 10a.m. on Monday, Feb. 20, followed by the cross-country and track and field

Lions fans won't see the Saint Leo Swimming cap next season... (Photo courtesy of Hailey Ji Cai Deyhun Latlief)

teams at 11a.m. the same day, to tell them that their programs were cut for the next season.

At this moment, and after waiting for five days to see what is happening, four coaches have learned that they are going to lose their jobs, and over 70 athletes do not have an athletic program anymore for the next semester. This news was "extremely violent," said Viallon.

Indeed, it is now time for athletes to start the transfer process to find a new school and a new team, with the aim of continuing both academic and athletic careers. Unfortunately, student-athletes only have a few months left to do so.

"I wish Saint Leo University was more prepared to support the affected athletes, as many athletes currently feel alone in figuring out what next steps to take," said one athlete who prefers to stay anonymous.

"This decision, along with the communication of the news, feels very out of alignment with the university's Core Values," the anonymous athlete added, reflecting the thoughts of many athletes after the meeting.

Beyond this, it is also the

loss of a family.

"It was like having a family and having it taken away from you. It was very emotionally hard for my teammates and coaches," said Viallon.

Other athletes are also scared for the university's future and have to stop their sports career, even though they still have NCAA eligibility.

Albert La Red, a junior on the track and field team, is one of them.

"For the upcoming fall semester, I will remain at Saint Leo because of the amazing education that professors offer and how close the university is to my home," said La Red.

But these decisions affected him and his teammates.

"I was looking forward to competing with the same group of athletes that I was able to grow a bond with during the cross-country season," said La Red. "Being surrounded by talented and kind-hearted individuals, I was able to find a passion for life I might not have developed otherwise."

Everyone is hoping that the affected student-athletes are finding a new "home" where they can continue to train, compete, and follow their academic careers.



The cohesiveness of the men's cross-country team is seen before the final conference championship in program history, fall 2022. (Photo courtesy of Hailey Ji Cai Deyhun Latlief)

Saint Leo Community Survey

What comments do you have for Saint Leo University?



Saint Leo University to move away from Coca-Cola products; shifts to Pepsi

Satyne Doner
Arts & Culture Editor
Sophia Sullivan
Editorials Editor

As of March 20, students will no longer walk up to empty vending machines, all thanks to a new partnership with Pepsi.

After a five-year contract with Coca-Cola expired, Saint Leo University is switching to Pepsi products.

There is one obvious reason for this change: Pepsi has the most offerings for students.

According to Dr. Anthony DeSantis, the associate vice president of Student Affairs, Pepsi boasts a wider variety of beverages than Coca-Cola. They offer sodas, sports drinks, energy drinks, juices, and ready-to-drink Starbucks coffee.

"Their portfolio is just so much bigger," said DeSantis. "And it reaches a larger population of people that are actually drinking what is being produced right now."

Chloe Doherty, a freshman majoring in forensic science, was very enthusiastic about Gatorade being offered on campus.

"I would love that!" exclaimed Doherty with wide eyes. "It's refreshing."

On the other hand, Khamille Labbé, a senior majoring in English, is concerned about getting new drinks given the current state of Saint Leo.

"We lose centers, sports, and even a college, but we get drinks?" questioned Labbé.

However, according to DeSantis, not only does Pepsi offer a wider product variety, but it will also provide financial benefits to Saint Leo students.

As a matter of fact, DeSantis said universities who made the switch experienced an 18-20 percent increase in sales within the first year. This is mostly because Pepsi has so much variety – students will no longer have to drive to a gas station to obtain their beloved Muscle Milk, Starbucks, or Celsius.

"It's who gives you the best option to make the most money to benefit the institution," said DeSantis. The more products that sell, the more money will be available to the

university for things such as student scholarships and athletics.

The change took careful planning and much research. DeSantis said that he spoke to six other colleges about their experience with Pepsi products, and they were all satisfied with it.

"We did our homework," said DeSantis.

Therefore, on March 9 and 10, Coca-Cola will come to campus to remove their products and machines from the premises. During this time, there will be a smaller number of refreshment options available on campus.

A complete swap to Pepsi will occur over spring break, March 13-17, when most students will be off campus, to affect the fewest number of students possible.

According to DeSantis, all vending machines, soda fountains, and coolers will be changed out

during this time. When students return from break, Coca-Cola will be no more, and Pepsi products will be all over campus. In addition, there will even be vending machines in areas that did not previously have any, like the parking garages.

Students will be happy to hear that in general, there will be a greater number of vending machines. Additionally, there's a level of fairness in pricing that students will benefit from.

"All the pricing will be the same," said DeSantis. "If you go to the vending machines or FUZ, all the prices will be the same. Right now, it's not, and that's not fair to students."

After the coolers, fountains, and vending machines are swapped, students can expect a different layout. DeSantis points out that nothing will be remodeled, but it will just look different.

It's important to note that Pepsi

is looking forward to the partnership and what they can offer students – events, marketing, and convenience – something Coca-Cola did not offer.

"Pepsi wants to have events, they want to do things with us," said DeSantis. "They want to partner with us."

Pepsi's first step toward this partnership is a special kickoff event will be held on March 20 from 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m. on the back patio of the Student Community Center. Students are encouraged to come and celebrate the new partnership.

In all, DeSantis believes that this is a win-win situation for Pepsi, the university, and students. Campus students and faculty will have more options than ever before out of the sparkling new vending machines, fountains, and coolers. And, DeSantis guarantees that students will rarely see an out-of-stock vending machine or cooler again.



Distribution disruption: in the past, complicated relationships between distributors made filling vending machines difficult. However, with only one distributor for Pepsi located close to campus, students can expect a much more efficient service (Photo by Satyne Doner).

PepsiCo's Products

Juice Drink

Ocean Spray
Dole
Naked
Tropicana

CSD - Soda

Pepsi
Mountain Dew
Mug Root Beer
Sierra Mist

Functional Beverages

Rockstar
Yachak
Kevita
Bang

RTD Coffee

Starbucks

Tea

Lipton
Pure Leaf
Brisk

Hydration

Aquafina
LIFEWTR
Bubly
Voss
propel

Sports Drinks

Gatorade
Muscle Milk

Specialty

Viva Sol
Siberian Chill

Let's celebrate African American art

Sophia Sullivan

Editorials Editor

Although Black History Month has passed, it is important to continue to celebrate the African American culture's impact on the arts and humanities. Throughout American history, African Americans have had an essential influence on our culture. What they create reflects a rich culture that is often overlooked and should be highlighted regardless of the month.

When you think of art, you are probably picturing paintings or sculptures or basket weaving. However, one of the most prominent forms of art by African Americans is the written word.

Amanda Gorman, a 24-year-old poet and activist, is an excellent example of this. As the first National Youth Poet Laureate, she creates poetry that is moving, provocative, and focused on change.

"There is always light. If only we're brave enough to see it. If only we're brave enough to be it," says Gorman in her inaugural poem, "The Hill We Climb."

Gorman even read at President Joe Biden's inauguration in 2021, where she delivered a stunning performance.

Gorman offered raw yet encouraging words of hope and wisdom to the country that day and continues to do so in her poetry collections.

While not as recent as Gorman, another African American artist that should be on everyone's radar is Kara Walker.

Walker is a painter, but not in the sense you might expect. She is best known for her expansive silhouette murals.

Art and history go hand in hand, and Walker's work surely reflects this. Her art focuses on the lingering effects of slavery and oppression.

They may appear simple at first glance, but her pieces are overflowing with emotion. As Walker says, "I have no interest in making a work that doesn't elicit a feeling."

And isn't that what art is all about? It should make you feel something, or question the world,

or open your mind to new ideas.

Both ladies do just that. Through their culture, backgrounds, and activism, they are lights in not only the African American community but also that of art.

As college students, let's do our part to learn, grow, and expand by experiencing art from other cultures. Discovering and appreciating art from the African American community is a great place to start.



Amanda Gorman continues to inspire and empower through her artful words. (Photo via Amanda Gorman's Instagram)

Eternity Rodriguez weighs in on strong women, diversity, and building confidence through uplifting others

Satyne Doner
Arts & Culture Editor

“There isn’t just one way to define a strong woman,” Eternity Rodriguez said. “Strong women have so many different qualities that cannot be confined to one box.”

Rodriguez cannot be confined to one box, either; the sophomore in psychology is a sister of Sigma Sigma Sigma, the current vice president of

recruitment for the Panhellenic Council, a member of Saint Leo University’s choir programs, and a contestant in Miss Florida and Miss America Scholarship Organization. She is also the founder of a non-profit organization, Rockin’ With Confidence, and a volunteer with Special Olympics Florida.

Her journey to establishing Rockin’ With Confidence started with pageantry, even though as a child she never pictured herself



Through Rockin’ With Confidence, Rodriguez hopes to make an impact on our youth.

idolizing the likes of Miss America or Miss USA. The lack of diversity disheartened her.

“I never truly saw positive representation of strong, empowered Black women. I hated everything that made me unique,” Rodriguez said. “Especially my hair. I did everything in my power to conform to societal beauty standards and match my peers.”

Things changed when pageant-beauty Cheslie Kryst won Miss America 2019. For Rodriguez, this was the first time someone who looked like her won such an award. This feeling of empowerment and inclusion impacted her so much that she decided to help others feel the same.

In May 2021, Rodriguez founded Rockin’ With Confidence, a movement dedicated to diversity, equity, inclusion, and positive representation. She uses social media platforms to spread uplifting messages, affirmations, and stories of diversity.

“The more we are exposed to inclusion, diversity, and representation, the easier acceptance becomes,” Rodriguez explained. “This movement isn’t just dedicated to one demographic [...] everyone deserves to feel represented, included, and accepted.”

While Rockin’ With Confidence serves as Rodriguez’s personal passion project, she uses outside platforms to help spread her message. As a unified partner with the Area 5 Hernando County region of the Special Olympics

Florida, she hopes to continue building a platform of awareness and inclusivity for those with intellectual disabilities.

Moreover, her experience with pageantry didn’t just act as a catalyst for her confidence platform. It also taught her valuable life skills such as personal branding, marketing, and public speaking. She encourages other young women to get involved and start bettering their community.

“I would encourage any young women who want to earn scholarship money, have a dedication to service, style, and success, to join pageantry,” Rodriguez says. “If they want to be part of an ever-growing sisterhood, give the Miss America organization a chance because it is life changing.”

In the future, Rodriguez hopes to continue growing the Rockin’ With Confidence movement and partner with other organizations that already work in diverse communities. She will continue to grow within her Saint Leo community as well as her various pageantry and volunteering endeavors. She also wants to create confidence-building workshops and other educational opportunities for people of all backgrounds to come together and celebrate their diversity.

“I hope to be able [...] to show that representation matters, and diversity, equity, and inclusion play a huge role in building the confidence of our youth.”

Photos courtesy of Eternity Rodriguez



Pageant veterans like Nia Franklin and Cheslie Kryst inspired Rodriguez to join the movement and inspire others.

Brain Injury Awareness Month: How to support athletes affected by a concussion

Isa Riaño

Advertisement Manager

In light of March being Brain Injury Awareness Month, Saint Leo University faculty and staff encourage students to learn how to support athletes affected by a concussion. Follow along to learn more about this topic and what you can do to raise awareness this month.

Traumatic brain injuries, especially concussions, happen more than most can imagine to athletes.

"We occasionally see concussions in basketball," said Lance Randall, the head men's basketball coach.

The symptoms vary depending on the brain injury's severity; however, some are the most common.

"The symptoms I have seen the most in people who experience severe concussions are dizziness, memory issues, and general 'brain fog' with a headache," said Randall.

When athletes have a concussion, the NCAA has safety measures for them to follow.

"Most of the time, the first few days, the individual is restricted from anything that can overstimulate the senses," said Randall.

Athletes must recover physically and emotionally after their brain injury before returning to their games and practice.

"The NCAA has very specifically defined procedures and requirements that the concussed student-athlete has to pass to move on to playing again at some stage," said Randall.

Most of the time, athletes can recover with the appropriate medical treatment. However, there may be severe cases when they require further investigation.

"If the symptoms are more severe, sometimes, CT scans of the brain are requested, but that is rare," said Randall.

Apart from the physical effects of brain injuries in athletes, most also experience mental health challenges.

"Being out of your sport, out of routine, and isolated can negatively affect your mental

health," said Randall.

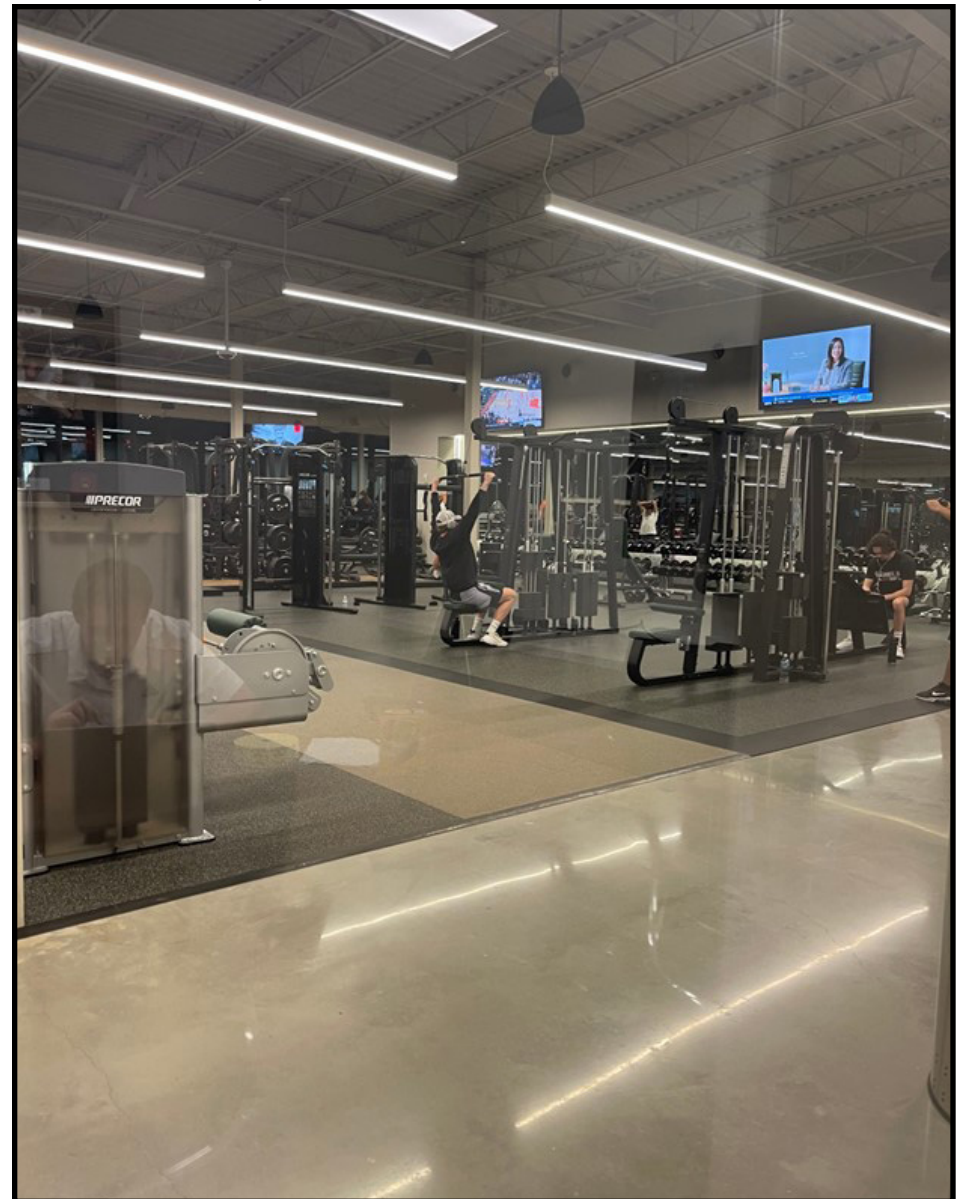
Not only do athletes experience feelings of sadness after being isolated from their sport, but they can also later have problems managing their emotions, which can impact their performance in their daily activities.

"It being a brain injury can lead to depression, anger, and worse. This can be in the short term and the long term," said Randall.

As a community, it is essential that we are patient with those who have a brain injury and that we are aware of its short-term and long-term effects on them. We can support anyone who has gone through this challenging situation in multiple ways.

"It is important to let student-athletes know they should not feel pressure to return to their sport hastily," said Randall. "What they must do first is to ensure that they rest, recover, and find proper medical treatment."

In all, Brain Injury Awareness Month serves as a reminder to be informed about the long-term and short-term effects concussions have on those who experience them. Let us take the time to use the resources on and off campus to be informed on this critical topic.



According to students and faculty, ensuring that athletes avoid unsafe actions, such as striking another athlete in the head, reduces the risk of traumatic brain injuries.



According to Saint Leo University faculty, even if athletes are usually very passionate about their sport, they should be afraid of the risk of injury every time they get on the field.

Athletes on Air – Reagan Buhrman – Women’s Lacrosse

Pia Perthen

Sports Editor

Fans and supporters might have seen an athletic young woman representing the #1 on her jersey and giving her best on the lacrosse turf.

This student-athlete is Reagan Buhrman from New Hampshire, a junior majoring in business management with minors in criminal justice and finance, who is not only an exceptional student but a talented lacrosse player. Playing defense, Reagan has been pursuing her passion for lacrosse and practices almost every day. Previously, she was captain for three years on her high school team at Inter-Lakes.

Buhrman shared some of her experiences and insights on the sport, as well as her personal goals and inspirations.

“I love the life skills I have learned from playing lacrosse, like time management, teamwork, determination, and self-motivation,” said Buhrman.

When asked about her favorite memory at Saint Leo, Buhrman immediately pointed out the exhilarating moment of beating Embry-Riddle on their turf last season and making it to the semi-finals of the Sunshine State Conference.

Buhrman loves the competitiveness and team camaraderie most about her sport.

“Every day when I step on the field, I challenge myself to be better than the day before,” she said. “Lacrosse pushes me to be the best teammate, leader, and player I can be.”

Buhrman’s idols are her parents, whom she considers her biggest supporters. They have taught her the values of hard work and perseverance from a young age, helping her push herself past the limits she never thought she had.

Buhrman’s biggest goal is to live a life full of love and happiness. She wants to be remembered as someone who creates a space where people are excited to be around her and look forward to seeing her again. Therefore, her motto is “Carpe Diem,” which means “seize the day.” She lives each day to enjoy the present and live life to the fullest because she thinks that you never know what could happen next.

When asked about her biggest successes at Saint Leo, Reagan emphasized the relationships she has made with her professors, teammates, and coaches.

“The community here at Saint Leo is amazing, and the relationships I have made and continue to make will last a



Photo courtesy of Saint Leo Athletics

Buhrman strives for success on and off the court and is determined to win with her team.



Photo courtesy of Saint Leo Athletics

Lacrosse can get heated, and a lot of physical work and mental toughness are necessary to succeed.

lifetime,” said Buhrman.

It is vital to mention that Buhrman won the Elaine Evans Spirit of Saint Leo Award in 2023. Winners of this award embody the character of former Saint Leo women’s basketball player Elaine Evans, who passed away in 2004 during her freshman year. The award recipient is someone who goes above and beyond what is asked of her, showing the true spirit of the university’s Core Values and spirit of the community. These are characteristics that Buhrman can be identified with and show her impact at Saint Leo both on and off the lacrosse turf.

Apart from lacrosse, Buhrman also teaches spin classes at the Wellness Center, which she considers to be a side gig she would love to pursue in the future.

“I have been teaching spin

classes since April of last year, and I absolutely love it!” said Buhrman.

Outside of her passion for lacrosse and teaching spin, Reagan also loves being outdoors and enjoys running, hiking, swimming, boating, and traveling.

When asked about her post-graduation plans, Buhrman shared her aspiration to be a wealth manager or financial planner after college. She wants to work with people and help them achieve their financial goals.

In conclusion, Buhrman is a remarkable student-athlete who embodies the values of hard work, perseverance, and community. Additionally, she wanted to let everyone know that she sees a lot of “DUBS” (wins) in the future for the Saint Leo women’s lacrosse team, and encourages all to stay tuned for their upcoming games.

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