

Brandon University

External Review of Bobcat Varsity Athletics, Programming and Operations



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Submitted to: Brandon University President's Executive Council

By: External Review Committee

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I. Acknowledgements

The Review Committee would like to acknowledge and thank all members of the Brandon University community who made themselves available to meet and speak with us over the course of the Review, especially within the timeframe requested of them. We appreciate how gracious everyone was with their time and are thankful for the positive contributions made to the work undertaken by the Review Committee. We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to Donna Neufeld and members of the senior leadership team for their logistical support in facilitating the on-site visit and other administrative aspects of the Review.

We are hopeful that the Findings and Recommendations shared throughout this Report will provide Bobcat Athletics, and Brandon University as a whole, with the insight and guidance they need to continue their efforts toward a safer and more inclusive university athletics environment.

II. Definitions & Acronyms

Acronym/Term	Definition
AFA	Athletic Financial Assistance
Athletics and HLC	The staff in the Athletics and HLC units work together to deliver Bobcat Athletics, Recreation and HLC facility programs and services to both the internal and external community
Bobcat Athletics	The unit that manages and oversees Brandon University athletics
BU	Brandon University
CAC	Coaching Association of Canada
CCAA	Canadian Collegiate Athletics Association. The national governing body of Athletics in Canadian Colleges.
CCES	Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport
Coaches	Refers to all BU coaches, which includes Full-Time, Part-Time, Head Coaches and Assistant Coaches
CWUAA	Canada West Universities Athletic Association, the league in which BU Volleyball and Basketball participate
Leadership Team	Members of the President's Executive Team (President, Vice Presidents, AVP, and Human Resources)
HLC	Healthy Living Centre
PEC	President's Executive Council for Brandon University
MCAC	Manitoba Colleges Athletic Conference. The league in which the BU Soccer teams participate.
Review participant	A member of the BU community who participated in the Review.
Rule of Two	A component of the Coaching Association of Canada's 'Responsible Coaching Movement' that ensures all interactions between athletes and their coaches are "open, observable, and justifiable" and requires that at least two trained and screened coaches (or at least adults) are present when interacting with an athlete.
Safe Sport	Sporting environments which foster physical and emotional safety for participants and maintain adequate mechanisms to protect against and respond to concussion and other injuries, bullying, abuse, harassment, discrimination, and other forms of maltreatment.
The University	Brandon University (BU)
U SPORTS	The governing body of Athletics in Canadian Universities. The league in which BU Volleyball and Basketball teams participate.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Maltreatment in sport has received increasing awareness worldwide in recent years. The athlete-coach relationship is being re-examined; a shift is underway toward a greater focus on athlete protection, recognizing that behaviour toward athletes that may have been considered socially acceptable in the past is no longer tolerable in today's sport landscape. Organizations engaged in sport in Canada, including Canadian colleges and universities, must be prepared to respond to this shifting landscape and must remain steadfast in their commitment to creating safe and inclusive sporting environments for the betterment of all participants.

1.1. Background

The senior leadership team at Brandon University ("BU"), namely, the President's Executive Council ("PEC") launched an independent external review of the Bobcats Athletics program in the Spring of 2022 ("the Review"). The central motivation for BU to initiate the Review was in response to the findings of an external investigation conducted into allegations related to harassment and sexual violence made against the (former) Head Coach of BU's Women's Soccer Team. As several allegations were substantiated, BU acknowledged its failure in this instance to its commitment to provide a safe and inclusive campus. In committing to do better, the University recognized the critical importance of a review for better understanding what improvements need to be made to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.

Three individuals external to BU were identified and invited to conduct the Review; a Review Committee Terms of Reference was finalized ([Appendix A -](#)), and the Review Committee was established in May 2022, with a site visit organized in June 2022.

1.2. The Review Committee

The PEC sought to put together an external Review Committee that would have the requisite knowledge of, and experience with, university athletics operations, university student services and student experience, and Safe Sport. For that reason, the PEC identified the need for the participation of an Athletic Director (or former Director), a Dean or Vice-President of Students who has responsibility for Athletics (or former Dean or Vice-President), and a lawyer or specialist with specific expertise in harassment, discrimination, sexual violence, and protecting and preventing maltreatment in sport. The following individuals were identified as appropriate for serving on the Review Committee:

Mr. Steve Fitterer – Varsity alumni and former Vice President, Students, Mount Royal University.
Ms. Melissa Knox – Varsity alumni, Human Rights Lawyer, and Sports Lawyer with Sport Law.
Ms. Sandy Slavin – Varsity alumni and former Athletic Director, University of Lethbridge.

Short bios of the members of the Review Committee are provided in ([Appendix B -](#)).

1.3. Review Mandate and Scope

A typical review identifies concerns or deficiencies or aspirations and sets out recommendations for addressing gaps or improving processes. Reviews can also be conducted to assess culture and ways in which organizations can improve their performance. Generally, reviews are process-oriented and, unlike

investigations, do not assess evidence, weigh credibility of witnesses, or make decisions about culpability. To that end, the purpose of the Review was not to investigate any one incident or complaint.

Instead, through the lens of preventing maltreatment and fostering a safer and more inclusive department for all, the Review Committee was tasked with evaluating the current environment and culture of the Bobcat Athletics program and making Recommendations on areas for improvement. Any feedback from BU participants on their experiences with Bobcat Athletics was received for the purposes of identifying systemic issues or gaps and informing the Recommendations.

While the Review Committee was given a broad scope to consider what all operations (whether within the department or institution-wide) could be negatively impacting the Bobcat Athletics environment, the primary focus of the Review was not to consider in depth the following areas: hiring, recruitment; eligibility; marketing or sponsorship; fundraising or funding. To the extent these areas are discussed within this Report, the purpose for doing so was to note the potential impact certain aspects of those areas may be having on the overall Bobcat Athletics experience. The scope of the Review focused on the Athletics & Healthy Living Centre (HLC) Unit; however, it is anticipated that many of the Recommendations could be transferrable, with some slight modifications, to other departments or units on campus.

The full text of the Terms of Reference, which the Review Committee was given the opportunity to review and agree to, is attached in [Appendix A](#) - .

1.4. Review Process

The Review consisted of the following elements:

- Documentary Review

Documents that were within the scope of the Review included material that was both specific to the Athletics & HLC Unit and general to the University to assess their impact on the student-athlete and athletics staff experience. Reviewed documents included policies, procedures, guidelines, contracts and agreements, relevant training and education materials, handbooks, and organizational structure outlines.

The list of information requested and/or reviewed is provided at [Appendix C](#) - .

- BU community engagement

With the support of the PEC, the Review Committee identified and invited various groups and members of the BU community—staff, faculty, coaches, university administrators, students, and student-athletes—to meet with the Committee both in person and virtually.

The Review Committee attended the BU campus on June 13-15, 2022, to conduct in-person interviews. At the site-visit, the following members of the Brandon University community were invited to meet with the review team:

- University President

- University Executive Leadership Team
- Director, Human Resources
- Diversity and Human Rights Advisor
- Sexual Violence Education and Prevention Coordinator
- Athletics Director
- Athletics Staff
- Head Coaches
- Assistant Coaches
- HLC Staff
- Dean of Students
- Student Athlete – captains and veterans
- Student Athletes – rookies
- Alumni Athletics
- Student’s Association

The on-site visit timetable is included at [Appendix D](#) - .

Following the on-site visit, the Review Committee made a concerted effort to be open and available to BU staff, faculty, and students at the time and in the manner most convenient and accessible for them. The Review Committee invited BU community members to provide feedback directly to the Committee, either in writing, through virtual interviews, or both. Individuals were advised they could speak alone with the Committee, in a small group with others, or with only select members of the Review Committee. Ultimately, save for one or two occasions, all three members of the Review Committee were present for each interview.

The Committee conducted approximately 12 group and individual interviews lasting 60-75 minutes on average over the course of several weeks. The Committee also received and reviewed written submissions by e-mail with opportunities to follow-up and communicate with individuals in writing to clarify and better understand feedback received.

Everyone interviewed was asked a similar set of questions, based on an interview outline the Committee had prepared following their documentary review. Generally, individuals were asked to provide comment in the following areas based on their knowledge and experience:

- Perception of culture within the University, Athletics, and individual teams
- Awareness of, and feedback on policies, practices, and effective functioning of the department
- Education, training, and evaluation related to safe sport
- Feedback or suggested solutions to concerns raised and/or gaps identified regarding safe sport

The Committee listened carefully and engaged in meaningful conversations, asking follow-up questions where appropriate, and made efforts to ensure Review participants were able to ask the questions they needed to better understand the Review process and provide feedback as complete and clear as possible. It was important for the Committee to emphasize to the BU community that communications and information disclosed would remain confidential so that participants would feel safe in sharing their perspectives.

Importantly, the approach to the Review was designed to focus on gaps and areas of operation which could negatively impact the Bobcat experience for members of the University. As such, the report focuses on areas for improvement rather than highlight the areas that Bobcat Athletics is doing well.

2. Review Context

Given the events that led to the Review as described in this Report, the Committee was mindful of BU senior leadership's motivation to initiate the Review without delay. The Review would assist in identifying and addressing any significant deficiencies in Bobcat processes or practices that would require immediate attention and corrective measures developed in advance of the 2022-2023 academic year. While the Review Committee agrees that this approach was likely the best approach, the timing of the Review was not "ideal" as it was conducted at the end of term when most, if not all, student-athletes were not on campus or available to participate.

Since the Review was heavily focused on engagement with members of the BU community for the collecting of a qualitative information, the Review was framed by those who were willing and able to participate. In the case of student-athletes, the Review Committee would have liked to engage with more student-athletes, noting that not all teams are adequately represented in the Review from a student-athlete perspective. This under-representation of student-athletes from certain teams affect, to some degree, the Committee's ability to generalize the Findings related to perception and experience as a Bobcat student athlete, particularly when it comes to internal team culture. That said, the Committee gathered extensive information from those student-athletes who did participate, in groups or individually, and the information received was incredibly insightful in combination with other information gathered over the course of the Review. That said, the Recommendations are provided having considered the limitations experienced with student-athlete participation.

In addition to the limited level of student-athlete participation in the Review, the Committee also recognizes that many Canadian universities and sport organizations encountered disruption and restrictions to regular operations over the past two years because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Review Committee has considered the fact that some processes and practices within the Athletics Unit may have been impacted due to the pandemic and health, safety, and physical distancing requirements.

3. About this Report – Report Outline

This Report outlines key Findings based on the information the Committee has gathered and what the Committee heard from members of the BU community. This Report presents several Recommendations, along with suggested action items for realizing those Recommendations. Some Recommendations are noted as Priority Recommendations, which the Committee sees as most pressing and requiring immediate attention.

In addition, this Report also provides the PEC with a list of Additional Recommendations based on observations the Committee has made over the course of the Review which may extend beyond the scope of Review, but which the University may benefit from knowing and addressing.

While the Recommendations are not mandatory, they are encouraged to be addressed and implemented based on the Committee's collective knowledge of, and experience with, leading practices in the Canadian sport and/or university sectors.

The Review Committee is hopeful that producing this Report initiates a multi-stage process for Bobcat Athletics and the University. The Review Committee envisions the next stage to be focusing on implementing at the earliest opportunity the Priority Recommendations provided in this Report (where implementation is not already underway). Subsequent stages would include initiating the implementation of Recommendations which the Committee estimates as taking more time to develop and implement, over the course of the next 12 months, and thereafter monitoring and evaluating progress over time.

As previously noted, readers should be reminded that the mandate for this Review was on highlighting gaps or areas of concern and to make Recommendations for improvement. Where appropriate, initiatives and strengths are highlighted that speak to some of the ways BU's existing culture is contributing to safe sport environments.

Finally, the Committee's Findings are provided only to the level of detail necessary to provide insight into what the Committee heard, but without revealing specifics that would identify student-athletes or other Review participants. As such, any Recommendations provided in this Report are motivated by what the Committee heard even though not all Findings could be discussed in great detail.

4. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN SPECIFIC AREAS

4.1. Perception and Reputation of BU Athletics

The Committee starts their Findings by addressing what they heard in almost every conversation with Review participants. The Committee heard about the positive reputation Bobcats Athletics and the Healthy Living Center has in the local community. This positive reputation comes from previous and current success of some of their teams, because of the work they do generating funds for local charities, and their involvement in youth camps, clubs, and other activities they run. Bobcat home games are broadcasted live on television, an abundance of articles are written about their teams and the University throughout the year, and the media has shown a great interest in following the Bobcats.

As a result, the Committee heard that the Bobcats, and the University, "are under the microscope". Student athletes are expected to be ambassadors to BU and have played a critical role in contributing to a positive image. The impact of this reputation is positive for the University as a whole, as well as Bobcat Athletics as a department, including from a community morale standpoint, and as an income generator—whether that is ticketing and attendance at home games and other activities that generate funds for teams.

The Committee begins by addressing the reputation of Bobcat Athletics & the HLC, and of Brandon University as a whole, because incidents that give rise to negative and harmful experiences by BU students risk tarnishing the positive reputation BU has built in the city of Brandon and broader community over the years. From a reputational risk perspective, the Committee emphasises the

importance of taking a proactive approach to fostering a safe and inclusive work, learning, living, and sporting environment.

Several Review participants brought up an incident related to sexual harassment/violence occurring in BU residence in or about 2016. While this 2016 incident was not discussed in any detail by participants, participants raised this incident as a point of conversation when explaining their general attitude toward BU at the institutional level when it comes to not adequately addressing serious complaints at BU. There is a perception, from both staff and students, that the University appears to want to protect the individual being complained about over and above the person making the complaint.

As such, it is important that adequate oversight, accountability, and reporting mechanisms—all of which are addressed in greater detail in subsequent Recommendations—are put in place to ensure that Bobcat Athletics, HLC and Brandon University instill greater confidence among their members in the institution's ability to respond to serious complaints promptly and adequately. This is so BU can continue to receive the support they do from the community and continue to do good in the community.

Recommendation 1: Conduct a risk assessment

A risk assessment is advisable at the institutional level to determine areas which could negatively impact on BU's reputation and ensure processes are put in place and monitored to minimize the impact. The Canadian [Centre for Ethics in Sport offers risk management](#) workshops and support that the BU may be able to access for support. Areas within Athletics which should be considered include:

- Eligibility and AFA processes
- Safe Sport Plan (see [Section 5.1](#))
- Community access and experience in the HLC
- Youth Programming and Camps

When it comes to how the Athletics Unit is perceived by both members inside and outside of the Athletics Unit, a common theme the Committee heard during interviews was that Bobcat Athletics operates in a "silo" or as an "island" with little communication or information flowing to and from Athletics to other administrative units across campus. This type of feedback about the lack of communication across different departments and units in a university setting is not uncommon. However, the perception that has been formed, primarily about some of the coaching staff, is that coaches would be unaware of proper university processes and protocols related to student admission requirements, deadlines and course registration, or other rules and processes that student-athletes must follow the same way any other student would be required to follow. Yet, some coaches tend to provide students with incorrect information or direction about the way certain practices are to be done. As a result, coaches, whether mistaken or indifferent to what the proper processes are, are seen by some outside of Athletics to expect to receive a certain level of special treatment by not following certain rules or protocol, which can frustrate other BU staff who feel a lack of respect or appreciation for their roles and responsibilities. This frustration of BU staff doesn't help to build positive relationships between university staff and coaches, which would overall be helpful to student success. In any event,

university staff, both within and outside of Athletics, are able and willing to work with Bobcat Athletics in support of the safety and success of the student-athletes.

Recommendation 2: Ensure greater clarity on processes

Bobcat Athletics should initiate communication with some of the key areas on campus, ie. Housing, Advising, Enrolment Services, to build bridges and work on processes that can improve service to Athletics within a system that works for these departments and for Athletics.

4.2. BU Marketing & Communications

The Bobcat Social Media Guidelines are available on-line but there does not appear to be any way of confirming that all student-athletes have reviewed and understand the guidelines. There are also reports of social media usage that do not meet the standards articulated in the guidelines. Furthermore, it appears that there has been little to no communication with BU's Marketing and Communication Department with respect to the social media usage of the student-athletes or the Bobcat Athletics staff.

There also tends to be a gap in understanding in the differences between how BU and Athletics/HLC operate. An example that was shared with the Review Committee was holiday closure messages shared by BU's communications team to the community not referencing that the HLC would be open.

Recommendation 3: Update social media guidelines and ensure they are reviewed

Bobcat Athletics and BU's Marketing and Communications team should review and update the Bobcat Social Media Policy/Guidelines. The updated Policy should reflect Bobcat Athletics' needs, Brandon University's expectations of acceptable behaviour, and be consistent with the [Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport \(UCCMS\)](#). Once the policy and guidelines meet both department's requirements, it should be clearly articulated in a document posted on-line and student athletes should sign off on reviewing and understanding their obligations. A joint training session by both departments would be considered a leading practice.

Bobcat Athletics and BU's Marketing and Communications team should work together to ensure that there is an understanding and consistent messaging with respect to hours of operation, holiday closures, etc.

4.3. Departmental Leadership and Strategy

The work environment within the Athletics & HLC Unit seems to be informal with many discussions and meetings happening in less structured settings. While Bobcat Athletics & HLC managers seem to meet, there doesn't seem to be any scheduled interaction between HLC staff and the coaching staff. Instead, communications and interactions with the Athletics Director or amongst staff tend to occur organically and spontaneously. This appears to be due to the size of the department where members of Athletics know each other well and the proximity of people's offices are conducive to interacting and accessing one another when needed, in addition to communicating by phone or e-mail. Most staff seem

comfortable with this approach but without formal meetings, there is no formal record of topics discussed, action items (with assigned responsibilities), or follow-up. There is a lack of clarity with respect to the department's strategy and vision and no completed strategic plan for staff to reference.

For the Full-Time coaches, less oversight and supervision are appreciated as they feel that they are sufficiently burdened by academic duties, team requirements (training, competition, scheduling, recruiting etc.), fundraising, and league commitments that a more structured approach to operations would jeopardize the collegiality and efficiency of how work is currently executed. Full-Time coaches are confident in their abilities and their relationships with the other coaching staff to execute their jobs as they determine are appropriate. Lack of structure can lead to Recreation staff determining their own priorities and the coaching staff setting their own direction. This style of operating can create challenges for Part-Time Head Coaches who cannot benefit from the spontaneous interaction and camaraderie that is developed from being physically present in the HLC on a full-time basis and year-round.

Overall, this leadership style and approach to operations can offer flexibility and avoiding unnecessary or rigidity in how decisions are made and how tasks are executed. However, an approach that is too "laissez-faire" and without intentional opportunities for engagement can result, from a Safe Sport perspective, in a lack of guidance and uniformity on developing safe and positive cultures within teams. A lack of consistent oversight and structure by which to monitor team culture can result in the Bobcat Athletics experience varying widely from one student to another, based heavily on the given coach a student has. For example, we heard from student-athletes who described their experiences playing on their team under different coaches and the drastic difference in team culture and overall enjoyment they experienced on the team as a result.

Recommendation 4: Finalize a strategic plan for the Athletics & HLC Unit

Some level of structure needs to be introduced where meetings are scheduled, minutes are taken and action items with assigned responsibilities are documented. Scheduled formal meetings would also be an opportunity to introduce new training requirements and educational opportunities.

Under the leadership of the Athletic Director, BU Athletics and HLC need to finish a **strategic plan**. An effort needs to be made to bring both sides of the department together and the plan must include strategies around Safe Sport, codes of conduct, facilities usage and accountabilities (i.e. consistent space booking policy/procedures) (See also [Sections 5.1](#) and [5.4.1](#)). Key performance indicators need to be established and must be both achievable and measurable. Accountabilities and responsibilities should be assigned to individuals, targets should be established, and progress should be reported, documented, and presented on an annual basis.

A strategic plan should help set a realistic picture of financial expectations and allow staff to make decisions based on agreed upon policies.

Review of the strategic plan and progress should be discussed with the Athletic Director on a regular basis in one-on-one meetings based on assigned individual responsibilities and should be part of each employee's annual performance evaluation (see also [Section 4.6](#)).

4.4. Department of Athletics Operations, Programs and Systems

The current Athletics & HLC Unit is a lean operation and struggles at times to keep up with the demands of supporting six Athletic teams in an effective and sustainable manner.

Departmental staff expressed satisfaction with the amalgamation of Athletics and the Healthy Living Center operations, noting it as a positive change for the department. Staff work well together and show loyalty to their department and a commitment to their jobs, taking on tasks to get the job done wherever and whenever needed. Expectations around roles and responsibilities have shifted, and expanded in some cases since the reorganization, and the volume of work has been discouraging for some at times.

The Healthy Living Center offers an opportunity bringing in members of the local community who may not be connected to the University in any other way. The Center can continue to facilitate this connection and generate revenue for the Unit but there does not seem to be a realistic understanding of what expectations should be and what is required to meet financial targets and at the same time balance the needs of all facility stakeholders (University/convocation orientation, academic classes, varsity practices and competitions, general student recreation use, fundraising activities, youth camps, community group bookings, etc.).

The Committee also heard there is some inconsistency with respect to how facilities are booked, used, and paid for. It appears student athletes and coaches do not seem fully aware of what is expected of them around the use of equipment and accessing HLC facilities. This has led in some cases to misuse of equipment and the facility and put the burden on the HLC staff to clean up after them. The HLC unit has the expectation to generate revenue and balance the use of the facilities with multiple user groups and are challenged to do this currently. Concerns raised by the HLC staff relating to facility misuse by student-athletes and coaches in the current environment are not being resolved.

When asked for feedback on what improvements to Unit operations and systems members of Athletics would like to see, the Review Committee heard on several occasions several Review participants advising that if the Athletic Director were to have an assistant, this support would be ideal for both staff and coaches. One Review participant commented that they have never seen an AD who does so much and have such a heavy workload. Overall, there is a lot of support and respect for the current AD, and many would like to see the AD supported by an administrative assistant.

With respect to BU merchandise, teams may request BU merchandise throughout the year for various purposes, for example as 'giveaways' for camps, but there appears to be a lack of structure or process around how requests are made and the type and amount of merchandise that each team can or should be given for free. While the Review Committee understands that staff have taken the initiative to improve their record keeping of the BU merchandise they provide to teams at no cost, structured processes for teams to request BU items and tracking of such items per team could be of use from a budgetary perspective.

Recommendation 5: Formalize and monitor adherence to policies to ensure consistency

An HLC Facility Booking and Fee Policy should be formalized, and can include (but is not limited to) protocol and expectations with respect to:

- facility and equipment usage and storage
- access to the HLC and having the necessary identification/membership for entry
- which members of a team (ex. Assistant Coaches, team managers, students, etc.) are given keys to secured locations and able to access certain locations (including office suite) and at what times
- setting booking priorities for different times of the day and different times of the year
- the process for anyone (or teams) to request, book, and schedule gym time and other HLC rooms or spaces and associated fees
- the process for making and granting requests for receiving BU merchandise and/or memberships for free (or at a reduced cost) the amount and type of donations each team can/will be available to them (this could also be developed in a separate “Donation” policy)

Once clearly communicated to members of the BU and greater Brandon community who access and utilize the HLC, the facility policy should be implemented consistently. The policy should set out mechanisms to enforce compliance and a process by which to request any exceptions to the rules. All BU coaches and staff should be expected to follow the policy, which could be included in the Coach and Student-Athlete Codes of Conduct and/or Handbooks (see also [Section 5.4.1](#)). Any failure to comply with the rules, should be promptly addressed by the Athletic Director.

Require that coaches play a greater role in ensuring that rules and protocol set by Athletics Unit staff are understood and followed by their student-athletes, and coaching staff. This requirement should be included in the Coach Code of Conduct (see [Recommendation 20:20 d](#)).

4.5. Job Descriptions & Contractual Agreements

The job descriptions for U SPORTS /CWUAA Head Coaches and Bobcat Athletics staff (coaches, athletic therapist) included in the collective bargaining agreement are quite basic and may not serve any meaningful guidance in carrying out day-to-day tasks and responsibilities. It appears the general sentiment is that except for one or two positions, the job descriptions for most other roles in the Athletics and HLC Unit are outdated. Although the Committee did not hear that this has caused any significant workplace confusion or miscommunication, there is nevertheless a need to revisit and revise the job descriptions to accurately reflect the work being done.

Job descriptions and contractual agreements for Part-Time Head Coaches and Assistant Coaches were non-existent and there seems to be no standard practice across the Unit in how Assistant Coaches and other volunteer members on teams are identified and selected. Furthermore, it is the Review Committee’s understanding that there is no record of Assistant Coaches documented in the Human Resources department. However, during the Review, the Committee understands that the University was in the process of preparing some contractual agreements for some or all these roles.

The University is fortunate to have many individuals who serve as Assistant Coaches while either receiving a small honorarium, or as a volunteer. These individuals interact closely with the student-athletes and are essential to the programs. Their relationship with the University is very informal, and normally recruited and hired by Head Coaches. From a Safe Sport perspective, the role of Assistant Coaches, Team Managers, or other team volunteers need to be more formal and captured in the Safe Sport Plan (see [Section 5.1](#)).

Recommendation 6: Review, update and communicate job descriptions and written agreements

All Athletics and Recreation staff job descriptions should be reviewed with the employee for accuracy. Once each staff member and the Athletics Director agree regarding job requirements, position descriptions should be submitted to Human Resources for information and potential reclassification and adjusted compensation if deemed necessary and appropriate.

Have a written agreement/contract (ex. employment contract) for all Out-of-Scope Coaches/Team Managers, (i.e., MCAC Head Coaches, Part-Time Coaches and Team Managers – whether volunteer or paid). This should be developed with Human Resources, signed by coaches/managers prior to participating with any team, and kept on file with Human Resources. The agreement should confirm what type of relationship they have with Brandon University as a whole (ex. employment, contractor, etc.), and should include:

- Summary of the role and responsibilities (provided by AD or head Coach);
- Any remuneration arrangements agreed to;
- Clarity around the type and scope of insurance coverage covering them, if any; and,
- Link(s) to where the coach can access BU policies and other relevant BU information that will apply to them and which they must adhere to.

4.6. Athletics Unit Strategy & Performance Reviews

Due to the lack of a clear strategy, performance management, and essential leadership, the Athletics Unit and its programs/teams are heavily impacted by the characteristics and philosophies of the Athletic Director and Head Coaches, which results in varied objectives and performance measures. For example, what is considered “success”? How does one strive for and measure excellence?

The Committee heard it is well known and acknowledged at the institutional level that performance evaluation is not carried out to any great extent across the University. One person commented that evaluations at the University are done “really poorly”. It was mentioned that since evaluations are not done consistently, if a performance review *was* being conducted, this implicitly meant that it was prompted because of a concern about the person being reviewed or for the purposes of a faculty member’s tenure or promotion.

Recommendation 7: Evaluate, monitor and communicate performance for all Athletics and HLC staff

Implement a structured performance evaluation process for all Athletics & HLC staff irrespective of engagement status with the University. These need to include Strategic Plan KPI’s and include input by both supervisors and/or the Athletic Director and athletes can provide input, where appropriate.

4.6.1. Coach Performance Evaluation

Like the rest of the University, it appears coaches are not subject to formal annual performance evaluations. Most coaches seemed to have some process in place by which to canvass feedback from their team on their coaching performance, including one-on-one or group meetings at the end of the season, exit interviews for outgoing athletes, or informal surveys. Some coaches also seemed to have created a culture by which their student-athletes can provide feedback on an ongoing basis by approaching their coach at any time with questions or concerns. In some cases, some coaches feel their team has been given considerable latitude to question the decisions of the coach and the extent to which feedback is given on a routine basis is almost “too much”.

For the most part, coach evaluations provided by student-athletes are provided directly to coaches, with no formal process by which to discuss the feedback with the AD, a member of HR, or other senior leadership.

The absence of a formal process by which the AD, Human Resources, or other appropriate individuals can review the performance of coaches, based on an established metric by which to evaluate performance and measure progress, poses some risk to the University.

Recommendation 8: Implement an independent coach evaluation process

Develop a performance evaluation template according to which all BU coaches will be measured. The Safe Sport Committee (see [Section 5.2](#)) should ensure student-athletes are adequately consulted on the inclusion of criteria for evaluation and the coach performance review process.

Develop a coach performance evaluation template form which each student-athlete can complete for each of their coaches, which Assistant Coaches can use to provide feedback on the Head Coach, and which Head Coaches can use to evaluate their Assistant Coaches. The completed forms would be provided to the Head Coach and the Athletic Director.

Develop and/or improve a performance management system, which aligns with strategic objectives and incorporates ongoing/regular feedback and concerns raised about the Head Coach and their coaching staff, especially when raised by student-athletes. Feedback on coaches should be provided anonymously by their student-athletes and members of their coaching staff. The system should include ensuring the AD reviews, at least annually, the coach’s performance according to the performance evaluation template.

4.7. Organizational Structure

At Brandon University, Bobcat Athletics and the Healthy Living Centre report through the Director, Business Operations in the Vice President Administration and Finance portfolio. As discussed in [Section 4.1](#), there seems to be a disconnect between Athletics and the other student support and student leadership services on campus. This has led to a lack of proactive training and education for both student-athletes and coaches/staff on issues such as health and well-being, diversity and inclusion, and sexualized violence.

Furthermore, having the Athletic Director, four coaches, the Athletics Therapist, and faculty in the Physical Education Unit of the Department of Education can lead to challenges. For example, right now the Athletics Therapist is Chair of the academic unit, resulting in a position of hierarchy over the AD, who is (supposed to be) in the primary position of authority in the Athletics Unit. Currently, there is no academic supervising the Unit, leaving some to question the academic integrity of the Unit.

Generally, there are three predominant models for Athletics reporting structures in Canadian universities:

- 1) Finance & Ancillary Services / (ex. BU) treating it more like a revenue generating department
- 2) Faculty (ex. Kinesiology), treating it like physical education/research
- 3) Student Services, treating it like student leadership and teamwork development

Recently, the University of Alberta transitioned Athletics from the Faculty of Kinesiology to Student Services. In their release, the University of Alberta stated,

Given their focus on student life, the addition of Athletics to the Office of the Dean of Students is a natural fit. The achievements of the Bears and Pandas serve as a point of pride for the whole of the U of A community and will continue to be so. Our athletes encourage other students to participate in community building by attending games and taking part in team fandoms. Bringing Athletics under the umbrella of the Dean of Students will create greater opportunities for both to promote broad student engagement, student success, and student wellness.

[New administrative homes for Athletics and Campus & Community Recreation | U of A for Tomorrow \(ualberta.ca\)](https://www.ualberta.ca/news/2019/04/new-administrative-homes-for-athletics-and-campus-community-recreation)

Athletics and HLC could instead be located within a department where appropriate support and oversight can be provided to a unique Unit that focus on student development, revenue generation and community engagement. The decision on where to place Athletics and HLC within the overall organizational structure should be made based on where the best support can be provided and not on who has the capacity to take on more direct reports. If changes can be made to reduce that number of direct reports within Athletics and HLC, then consideration should be given to that.

Recommendation 9: Review organizational structure

Long term, the University should look at transitioning the coaches and therapist out of faculty positions, while aligning their compensation in line with the faculty agreement. In the immediate term, the University should consider having the Athletic Director take a temporary leave and offer him an excluded contract that would maintain his faculty position and benefits and put them in a position

where they can provide proper oversight to coaches and the athletic therapist. This would reduce the number of direct reports required by the Department where Athletics & HLC is located.

Brandon University should investigate whether Bobcat Athletics should remain in Business Operations or move to Student Services to align with leading practices nationally and to better connect Bobcat Athletics to the other student services designed to support student-athletes.

The Review Committee recognizes that it is an issue at most Canadian universities that resources are often not distributed or allocated equally among all teams. The Review Committee heard by both staff and student-athletes about the differential treatment toward teams. Some Review participants commented that the Men's and Women's Soccer Teams are treated as "second class". One example we heard was the Women's Soccer Team being required to change into their team uniforms in public and at the field for home games due to not having access to a changeroom, whereas some teams, even when out of season, have access to a team room year-round.

Recommendation 10: Ensure equitable treatment for all teams

Consider the extent to which the University's organizational structure is impacting the disparate treatment among teams and if a change in structure is worth considering addressing this issue.

Furthermore, the Committee also heard by several Review participants (both men and women) the sentiment of a "boy's club" in Athletics, noting that most positions in the Unit are currently filled by men, which the Committee is concerned could lead to the feeling of exclusion for the few women in the Unit. Some Review participants commented that the appearance of a "boy's club" has resulted in women either not remaining in the Unit due to a lack of sense of belonging, and/or has deterred women from wanting to work in that environment based on a reputation that has formed about the Unit in this respect. The lack of adequate or balanced representation in the Unit has placed noticeable burdens on women in the Unit and across the University who are appealed to in certain instances where women student-athletes may require support, regardless of the staff's actual position title or responsibilities at the University.

Consider what intentional efforts should be directed toward recruiting women into Athletics and/or developing student-to-coach pathways or mentorship programs for women to assume greater leadership roles and what reasonable and realistic targets should be set for achieving a greater gender balance in the Unit.

4.8. Budget & Allocation of Resources

To meet the challenges of being competitive in their leagues, a heavy demand is placed on coaches to fundraise to support Athletic Financial Awards (AFA's), recruit, organize non-conference competition and consider other program enhancing initiatives, all in addition to specific coaching duties. From a small sampling of similar-sized programs at other colleges/universities, BU base funding for these activities is behind when compared to other institutions they are competing against.

The activities teams are engaging in to generate revenues have created positive relationships in the community. The Bobcats Men's Volleyball Team was consistently mentioned as a positive example. On the other hand, the time commitments expected from the student-athletes for fundraising activities on

top of their team duties (training/practice, competition, travel), their academic workload, and other community service activity need to be fairly considered when making budget decisions and planning ways to increase revenue that would involve the assistance from student-athletes.

There are clearly budgetary pressures within the Unit and the trend in enrolment decline without a change to program and service offerings will likely add to the financial strain. Coaches expressed the need for additional department budget support for certain items, such as non-conference play, and recruiting student-athletes and coaching staff.

As discussed previously in relation to overall Organizational Structure, the Committee heard from various Review participants that the University is not supporting programs/teams in a uniformed fashion. Head Coaches and coaching staff for the MCAC/CCAA teams (Men's and Women's Soccer) are missing key information because of the lack of formal meetings and shared minutes. The differential treatment by the University toward teams has been noticeable by student-athletes belonging to various teams and there is a feeling, at least by some, that the differential treatment is unfair, leaving some student athletes feeling less important and less valued than other student-athletes.

The Committee recognizes that differential treatment does not necessarily mean unfair treatment and there may be legitimate reasons for differences in budget allocation and other arrangements. However, operational decisions should not impact the way in which a student-athlete perceives their level of value as a Bobcat when compared to student-athletes on other teams.

Recommendation 11: Review financial commitment and ensure minimum standard is maintained to ensure safe sport expectations are met

The University needs to address the financial needs of the Bobcat Athletics and HLC Unit, while considering the University's financial situation. BU should consider if changes or reduction to the scope of programming offered would provide better quality, safe programming that can adequately support all student-athletes regardless of the team/program they belong to. In alignment with communicating a commitment to Safe Sport (see [section 5.3](#)), the University should revisit how to communicate to its student-athletes they are equally valued as a Bobcat.

BU should consider creating a pool of discretionary funds which BU teams could have access to on a discretionary and earned basis based on year end performance reviews, tied to the annual strategic plan (see [Section 0](#)), strategic plan KPI's, competitive team results, student-athlete reviews, academic success, student-athlete retention, and quality and quantity of team community engagement. If funding is provided from the VP Admin and Finance Office, there should be input from this department on the allocation of funds.

Consider the support and services provided to the U SPORTS, CCAA, and Club (curling, rugby) teams and investigate if there is an alternative way of delivering Club teams, for example as Student Union Clubs. Discuss with University the pros and cons of these Teams and Clubs representing the University.

4.9. Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment

The Review Committee Terms of Reference also tasked the Committee with examining conflict of interest and conflict of commitment situations that may exist and be impacting the student-athlete and athletics staff experience.

Participants described Athletics as a “family”, “tight knit”, with individuals very supportive of one another. Both staff and student participants, on their own initiative, referenced “blurred lines” when it comes to relationships and friendships. One Review participant commented, *“We need to set aside personal relationships and act on what’s best for the program.”*

Discussions with Review participants led to the following considerations:

- should friends be supervising friends? What boundaries should be put in place?
- should former players be put into leadership roles with their former teams and teammates without adequate standards or training on how to assume those new leadership roles?
- should coaches (and the athletic therapist) be teaching and grading their student-athletes’ work?
- should volunteers who work with the program be given access to the HLC at no cost to run personal for-profit programs?
- should Bobcat Athletics staff be renting houses/rooms or otherwise provide recurring living accommodations to student athletes?

Many of these issues are not unique to Bobcat Athletics and are discussed in other Athletic Departments in Canada. Based on concerns identified through the Review, the University should consider its process for how to identify and manage potential conflicts, including the ones listed above.

Recommendation 12: Review and communicate conflict of interest policy to ensure compliance

Review the current University’s Conflict of Interest Policy and make specific updates to reflect the needs in Athletics and HLC staff. For the Athletics staff, including coaching staff, to review the updated University’s Conflict of Interest Policy and recommit to understanding and adhering to the Policy. This could be done by including reference to the Policy in the Coaches Handbook/Code of Conduct, and other agreements signed by coaches and staff on an annual basis.

4.10. Student Supports

There are several supports offered and available to student athletes on campus (academic advising, advising, counselling etc.). Bobcat Athletics should ensure that all student athletes and coaches are aware of what is available and how these can be accessed.

Recommendation 13: Communicate the range of student athlete support services

Consideration should be given to inviting representatives from each of the different areas to present what’s available during the student-athletes annual orientation.

4.10.1. Mental Health

One coach told the Committee,

“We invest a lot of money in physical fitness, and we could do a better job with the mental health side. We could bring in someone who understands mental health. There’s a lot of stress for athletes. Someone needs to be available. We had an athlete with a mental health issue; they couldn’t make an appointment for 3 weeks and could not afford off campus health services. So, if it’s an emergency, that’s unacceptable.”

Similarly, a student-athlete commented,

“Mental health support could be better. It’s hard to figure out what could be going on inside someone’s head; what if they don’t know how to reach out for help? We need some form of mental health training or awareness. We get told about resources but we need training and knowing how to respond in those situations.”

In offering solutions, Review participants recommended bringing in a sport psychologist that could double as a counsellor, to be available to all students, but with enough skill and experience to understand the pressures of student athletes in the areas of performance and anxiety. Others noted having a full-time trainer, as opposed to only once a week, would be ideal for physical strength and conditioning. Others also expressed interest in having support in nutrition and learning about cost-effective ways of eating healthy.

Recommendation 14: Communicate mental health support

Consider in what ways mental health supports can be offered to student athletes, including educational sessions and/or engagement on discussing mental health and removing the stigma for those experiencing mental health issues.

4.10.2. Academic Advisors

Almost every student-athlete who spoke with the Committee, spoke highly of the academic advisors at BU. One of the student supports across campus that was consistently raised and raved about was the work of the BU academic advisors.

Recommendation 15: Maintain support of academic advisors

The Review Committee would only recommend that such supports continue; consider increasing awareness so all student-athletes can benefit from these resources, if they are not already doing so.

4.10.3. Safe Disclosure Officer

Review participants expressed interest in various roles they would ideally like to see as providing further support to Athletics, primarily student-athletes. Some described the role as a ‘sport psychologist’ and others a sport professional with expertise in Safe Sport-related matters as someone to speak with confidentially about their concerns and/or experiences within their teams and/or the department. Most

participants, when asked about their preference for a point of contact to be situated within or outside of the department, most participants would rather have an individual independent to the department (i.e., not reporting to the AD) but who could be proactively present in Athletics, attending their practices or team meetings, and visible as a form of support to students and a way to observe team environments.

The Committee is aware of sport organizations, colleges, and universities canvassing their options for the role external agencies, organizations, and individuals could play in support of student-athletes.

Recommendation 16: Create a Safe Discloser Officer position

Consider establishing a Safe Disclosure Officer who all students, including student-athletes, could speak to about concerns that impact the safe, healthy, and inclusive environments within the University. In the case of student-athletes, the Officer would ideally have sufficient knowledge, experience, and qualifications to understand and appreciate the student-athlete perspective and experience. Student-athletes would benefit from an impartial individual outside of Athletics to address any concerns that student-athletes may not feel comfortable bringing to their team, coach, AD or other member of Athletics. This position could have roles on the Safe Sport Committee and can have other supportive, advocacy and/or resource duties to help student-athletes navigate the Unit and University policies that affect them.

Engage all student-athletes, through a survey (see [Recommendation 29:](#)) to establish what are the most pressing areas of concern or support they would like to see in Athletics and/or at the University.

5. KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS TOWARD A COMMITMENT TO SAFE SPORT

For the purposes of this Report, the Review Committee defines Safe Sport as:

Sporting environments which foster physical and emotional safety for participants and maintain adequate mechanisms to protect against and respond to concussion and other injuries, bullying, abuse, harassment, discrimination, and other forms of maltreatment.

This definition is purposefully broad. Fostering an environment that is safe and free from all forms of maltreatment includes being able to understand and identify how systems and processes can leave people vulnerable to various forms of maltreatment. Considerations around equity, diversity, inclusion are important for achieving Safe Sport because they can bring attention to some of the ways (and reasons behind why) people are and feel bullied, harassed, discriminated against, or otherwise mistreated.

5.1. Bobcat Athletics – Safe Sport Plan

The key Findings and Recommendations in this section are geared toward identifying potential gaps within BU and Athletics' processes and practices that *could* ultimately lead to maltreatment of individuals, especially the student-athlete.

The Committee has learned that Athletics tries to share existing Safe Sport training with coaches as standards in the sport sector evolve. However, concerns were expressed to the Committee by Review participants that current efforts at ensuring all Bobcats understand and adopt a Safe Sporting attitude are lacking and that the existing structure is not set up to manage Safe Sport appropriately.

The more recent incident involving members of the BU women's soccer program was provided on several occasions as an example of an overall lack of awareness or understanding of acceptable behaviour, particularly with respect to coach-athlete interactions, a lack of uniform standards and processes across the Unit (and across the University, generally), and a lack of oversight for ensuring compliance of set standards.

In furtherance of the Unit's current Safe Sport efforts, the Committee sees the benefit in Athletics developing a fulsome Safe Sport Plan customized for Bobcat Athletics. The Committee envisions this "made for Bobcat Athletics" Safe Sport Plan would be developed collaboratively by the Athletics Unit with the support of other BU departments, service units, and subject matter experts, where needed and appropriate.

Part of this proposed BU Safe Sport Plan would entail the review and development of coach and student-athlete codes of conduct, handbooks, training and education plans, adequate reporting systems, and a mechanism for ongoing oversight, all of which is described in this section. While the Review Committee appreciates that time will be required to develop this Plan adequately and meaningfully, the Committee sees that such a Plan needs to be developed as a priority, with action to be taken toward the development of the Safe Sport Plan as soon as reasonably possible. To support the University in this endeavour, a Safe Sport Plan "**Blueprint**" has been provided in [Appendix F](#) - , for reference.

Recommendation 17: Develop a Safe Sport Plan

Develop a Safe Sport Plan – that is, develop a customized plan for how Brandon University (with the support of the BU Safe Sport Committee – see [Recommendation 18:](#)) will ensure it is following leading practices in Safe Sport and fostering a safe athletics environment. The Recommendations set out in this Report related to Safe Sport are intended to support BU achieve these aims.

5.2. BU Safe Sport Committee

Several individuals, both within and outside the Athletics Unit expressed interest in working together toward establishing a Safe Sport Plan. A committee should be composed of diverse voices from all levels of the University and BU Athletics and be empowered to help build momentum towards BU Safe Sport goals. The Athletics Unit could leverage the knowledge, talents, and skills of BU community members across BU faculties, departments, and units to align learning and enhance collaboration. This communication and collaboration within the University community can forge stronger relationships between Athletics and its campus partners. These connections may also take some of the burden off any one individual or small few within the University to lead the delivery of information that is in the areas of expertise of other faculties, departments, and/or administrative units.

Recommendation 18: Strike a Safe Sport Committee

Compose a BU Safe Sport Committee that has the initial mandate of:

- assisting with the implementation of the Recommendations in this Review related to Safe Sport—namely, the development of the Safe Sport Plan—and the other Recommendations, where appropriate.
- serving in an advisory capacity to BU senior leadership, whose reports and/or recommended direction carry weight and must be fairly considered by BU decision-makers;
- following the development of the Plan, maintaining an ongoing responsibility to monitor the Athletics Unit’s commitment to Safe Sport and implement the Plan.

The BU Safe Sport Committee should reflect the diversity of the BU community, generally, and include representation from:

- senior leadership
- student-athletes (including a mix of rookie and veteran players)
- coaches (including a mix of Head Coach, part-time, and Assistant Coach)
- Student Services
- Human Resources
- subject matter experts from the within and/or outside the BU community

Consider Safe Sport training opportunities for any members serving on the Safe Sport committee who may not otherwise receive Safe Sport training.

5.3. Communication of Commitment to Safe Sport

Promisingly, most Review participants did not report experiencing harassment or discrimination as a member of the BU community. However, it was noted by a small few that issues of discrimination, particularly when it comes to the treatment of international students within the University, generally, is an area that should be investigated. While setting the standards are important, communicating BU's commitment to upholding these standards is paramount.

From the student-athletes who participated in the Review, most expressed overall positive experiences as a Bobcat. There were some, however, whose experiences on their team had impacted them enough to question whether to continue as a Bobcat. Feedback from student-athletes was mixed when they were asked their level of confidence and trust in the Unit that complaints would be taken seriously and properly dealt with.

While some stated they felt very comfortable bringing issues of concern to teammates and/or their coach, we also heard a reluctance by some to report issues of concern because they would fear experiencing negative repercussions from such reporting, including retaliation by the coach or other person complained about and not being believed and stigmatized by others within Athletics.

One Review participant stated,

"We need to ensure there is support to those coming forward. We need to establish trust and build a culture where people can come forward and be confident in the process that the University will act appropriately."

It will be crucial for BU and Athletics to foster high trust among BU community members. Meaningful engagement and relationship building among all members of the BU community will help enhance transparency and accountability and build trust. It is important that actions match words and intentions. While this may be the current intent or desire of the Athletics Unit, it did not appear to be clearly communicated or actively lived by all members of the Athletics Unit on an ongoing basis. This strategy would involve strengthening connections and engagement across the University – such as between Athletics and the University, between Athletics' leadership and staff/coaches, between Athletics and student-athletes, and between coaches and their teams. It is also critical to explicitly encourage a culture where those bringing forward complaints will be taken seriously, be supported by an approach that is prompt, effectively, and respectful.

Recommendation 19: Develop a Safe Sport Communications and Engagement Strategy

Develop a communications and engagement strategy that intentionally and authentically signals BU's commitment to foster a safe and welcoming environment. The Review Committee sees the importance of such communications being institution-wide, though a specific strategy may be developed in this instance with Athletics. In communicating this strategy, BU and Athletics can launch (or continue, where applicable) campaigns of what it means to be a 'Bobcat' and weave in safe and welcoming messages that accomplish the following:

- Communicate BU values

- Communicate important information about Safe Sport including reassurance of prompt action in response to a complaint, and protections against retaliation for bringing complaints forward
- Communicate a strong sense of community and pride of belonging among all Bobcat teams which fosters a shared sense of unity regardless of the sport and reminds all teams they are valued the same.
- Integrate Athletics' commitment to safe-sport with relevant already-existing BU education and awareness campaigns. For example, themed education and awareness campaigns may already be planned to mark various weeks or months throughout the school year.

Empower, through strong and supportive messaging and communications, athletes to report potential violations of BU/Bobcat Codes of Conduct or other policy.

5.4. Safe Sport Standards

5.4.1. Policies, Handbooks/Guides, Codes of Conduct

At the Unit level, gaps were identified when it comes to clear rules around setting clear boundaries for the student-athlete/coach relationship. For example, we heard it was not uncommon for former BU student-athletes to serve in a coach capacity following their involvement as a player. While it is positive to see pathways being developed for student-athletes to assume leadership roles (coach, team manager) following their involvement as a player, it needs to be communicated that the nature of their role on the team has changed, along with the expectations toward their interaction with student-athletes, including former teammates.

Similarly, as discussed in section previously regarding the Finding that team culture is heavily influenced by the Head Coach, who often has great latitude over how to set that culture, there is a risk to student well-being if Athletics neither sets clear Safe Sport standards and expectations across all teams nor follows up to ensure compliance and comprehension of minimum standards. The risk is that coaches and students alike do not fully appreciate what protections against maltreatment are supposed to be in place and why, which could lead ultimately to maltreatment. Not only does this make it more difficult for student-athletes to be able to easily identify inappropriate conduct by their coaches or other person in authority, but this lack of clear standards also makes it more difficult to hold coaches and other staff accountable for their (mis)conduct.

At the same time, the Committee also heard of very positive and healthy practices occurring within some teams. All BU coaching staff could benefit from planned and intentional conversations on identifying leading practices within BU teams that are already in place and creating opportunities for sharing and cross-team learning.

Based on the documentary Review undertaken, there doesn't appear to be much documentary support for coaches assuming new coaching roles at BU. The Committee heard that support is provided when asked and questions related to processes, practices, protocols, etc. within Athletics or within the University at large will be answered, but it requires the new coach to initiate the questions. The Committee heard that Full-Time Head Coaches have, especially more recently, shown a lot more support and informal mentorship to Part-Time Head Coaches and Assistant Coaches. The Review Committee

sees that the guidance or informal mentorship that Full-Time Coaches may be able to offer to Part-Time Head Coaches and Assistant Coaches would be most welcome and well received.

Recommendation 20: Create Safe Sport tools, templates, codes of conduct and education materials

- 20 a.** Bobcat Athletics should develop a new **student athlete Handbook** (available in electronic format) which should include a Student-Athlete code of conduct, relevant safe-sport related policies, and sections on issues important to student-athletes for their safety and well being (as determined by the BU Safe Sport Committee), such as mental health, nutrition, etc. The University of Victoria has developed a student-athlete handbook ([Vikes Student-Athlete Handbook](#)) and can be used as a resource and starting point for the creation of a similar handbook for BU.
- 20 b.** Develop a **Student Athlete Code of Conduct** that reflects BU Policies and the [Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport \(UCCMS\)](#). There should be a clearly articulated process for students to follow should they wish to bring forward any concerns included in the Code. A fulsome review of the Code should be undertaken at the time of signing, and it is recommended that a mechanism is put in place to ensure the student-athlete understands the expectations under the Code, including a strong understanding of the Rule of Two and its practical application to ensure coaches and student-athletes are not putting themselves at risk.
- 20 c.** Bobcat Athletics should develop a new **coach Handbook** (available in electronic format) which should include a new Coach Code of Conduct, relevant safe-sport related policies, and information most helpful and important to coaches (as determined by the BU Safe Sport Committee) such as guides or supports to coaches, especially new incoming coaches, as a form of onboarding. Information/Resources to support the onboarding of new coaches could include:
- Rules around clothing, use of equipment and facilities
 - Guidelines and/or protocol around speaking to the media/journalists
 - Guidance on scholarships and options available to financial support student-athletes
 - Guidance on what is allowed or not allowed when it comes to recruiting student-athletes
 - Understanding team budget and available sources of revenue
 - Anything relevant or important to know to excel as a Head Coach
- 20 d.** Develop a **Coaches Code of Conduct** that reflects BU policies and integrates and aligns with Sport Canada's [Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport \(UCCMS\)](#). This Code of Conduct should be signed by all coaches/team managers or any other individuals, including guest instructors, who will interact with student-athletes (despite whatever limited interactions they may have with student-athletes). A fulsome review of the Code should be undertaken at the time of signing, and it is recommended that a mechanism is put in place to ensure the coach understands the expectations under the Code, including a strong understanding of the Rule of Two and its practical application to ensure coaches and student-athletes are not putting themselves at risk.

A well-regarded university coach code of conduct/handbook has been developed by the University of Victoria (entitled the [UVic Professional Code for Coaches](#)) and could be used as a guideline for Bobcat Athletics.

20 e. Incorporate into the coach and athlete handbooks (and/or Codes of Conduct) a set of **minimum standards that will apply to all BU teams** (i.e., ‘**BU team rules**’). The team rules should be developed by the BU Safe Sport Committee upon sufficient engagement and consultation with each team. Coaches and student-athletes should identify good practices that are already in place within their teams that could be adopted for other teams. The BU Safe Sport Committee can clarify in what ways the standard team rules can be modified and tailored to meet individual team needs. The team rules can be reviewed by the Athletics Unit leadership and BU senior leadership, and/or other appropriate individuals as needed. Team rules should address, but not be limited to expectations for behaviour related to:

- tardiness and attendance at training/practice, games, and other scheduled events for all team members
- prioritizing student academics where conflicts arise between class/academic responsibilities and practices/games
- the use of BU equipment and facilities according to BU protocol set by athletics staff
- curfew times on road trips
- the use of social media when engaging in sanctioned versus unsanctioned Bobcat or BU-related events or activities
- the consumption of alcohol for adult student-athletes and coaches during the season and when traveling or engaging in Bobcat-related events or activities
- prohibiting romantic relationships between student-athlete and any member of any coaching staff and the disclosure of any such relationships
- prohibiting any living arrangements in which a coach and athlete would reside in the same domicile (unless familial relation)
- socializing outside of specific team related activities, including coaches partying with their student-athletes or student-athletes on other BU teams
- general informal dispute resolution practices and protocol that will be implemented when there is a conflict among athletes and/or coaching staff and for challenging coach decisions
- reporting mental health issues

20 f. Identify **safe-sport related policies** that should be in place at the departmental level and revise existing and/or develop new policies/guidelines to address Safe Sport related topics and issues. Such policies/guidelines should be included in the student and coach handbooks and should include and/or cover:

- Rule of Two and setting boundaries in the athlete-coach relationship
- Travel
- Social Media
- Screening (see also [Section 5.5](#))
- Complaints/Reporting procedures (see also [Section 5.6](#))
- Player discipline (see also [0](#))
- Concussion and Safe Return to Play

Similarly, based on what the Committee heard, some student-athletes desire more clarity when it comes to coach decision-making, especially decisions involving a player dismissal, player discipline, and player selection (ex. starting line-ups). This is not an uncommon concern expressed by student-athletes generally.

Recommendation 21: Ensure coaches are trained and consistently communicating with athletes

To the greatest extent possible, there should be uniformity in place with respect to how coaches communicate certain decisions they make so that student-athletes do not feel decisions made by a coach are arbitrary. More structure in this respect allows for the avoidance of any appearance of bias or conduct by a coach to be seen as reprisal when legitimate reasons are provided to explain their decisions. A policy and/or set of guidelines should be addressed in the student-athlete and coach handbook, which should also address what the process is within teams and at the departmental level to respond to legitimate concerns over coach decisions. Coach decisions that should be subject to some level of structure and oversight include:

- the selection of team captains and/or the decision to not have captains in any given season
- player discipline and/or dismissal
- distribution of AFA's

5.4.2. Safe Sport Education & Training for Coaches and Athletics Staff

The Committee has been advised that BU Head Coaches are required to take Safe Sport training. The Committee heard that efforts have been made in the past to share and encourage Assistant Coaches and athletics staff to take the training as well, primarily as an opportunity for obtaining professional development credits or points. The Review Committee is not aware to what extent the training is being recorded and tracked to confirm who has taken what training and when, and there appears to be no follow-up conducted by the Athletics Director to ensure not only that the required training has been completed but also that those completing the training understand their responsibilities in fostering Safe Sport and that coaches, in particular, have a plan by which to achieve this. Instead, there appears to be a heavy reliance or trust in the individual coaches to understand for themselves how they are fostering a Safe Sporting culture within their teams and to undertake education as they see fit.

Similarly, it appears Head Coaches were asked to complete the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) Rule of Two training and incorporate it into their practices, but the Review Committee was not made aware of any follow-up, structured or otherwise, to ensure compliance.

Recommendation 22: Make coach education mandatory

Require that all coaching (head and assistant), training, and athletics staff who have *any* interaction with student-athletes (including volunteers, and guest instructors) complete annual pre-season training in the following areas, and develop a mechanism by which the Athletic Director will monitor compliance:

- CAC – Safe Sport training
- CAC – Rule of Two training
- CCES – Doping on-line training
- BU – Training on discrimination, harassment, and sexualized harassment/violence

This training is, of course, recommended in addition to any education or training mandated by the college or university sport governing bodies or leagues in which the BU teams play – where the requirements are inconsistent between leagues, the most stringent requirements should be applied uniformly to all BU teams. The CAC training recommended is the standard set by Sport Canada in terms of Safe Sport training for National Sport Organizations. Training/education in the areas of diversity, inclusion and sexual harassment/violence is considered a leading practice for universities.

It is understood that some coaches, depending on their involvement in sport outside of the University, may be required to take CAC Safe Sport and Rule of Two training. As a matter of practicality, the intention is to ensure coaches have taken the above-listed training at least on an annual basis and that a mechanism is put in place for coaches to confirm having completed it, and for the AD to follow up and ensure compliance.

Consider registering all coaches as members of the CAC, which is a leading practice at other Canadian universities.

One of the sentiments expressed by another BU coach regarding the incident involving the Women's Soccer program was how they wish they had a greater opportunity to offer guidance and advice to the (former) Women's Soccer Head Coach had they been more aware of the culture within the Women's Soccer team at the time. As noted, with the soccer Head Coaches serving in a part-time role and not permanently available on campus, engaging with part-time coaches are more limited and can be challenging.

Recommendation 23: Foster and normalize the importance of a safe sport culture

Require that all coaches engage in regular and intentional discussions on Safe Sport so that the language of safe and welcoming environments becomes understood and regularly used. These discussions could include discussing the Rule of Two communications circulated, working through scenarios, bringing in speakers, and team building around inclusivity. Coaches can share what they have learned with their teams. These intentional discussions (ex. recurring meetings or check-ins) offer an opportunity for coaches to engage in peer-to-peer learning and support, which could be especially beneficial to part-time coaches and should be scheduled as a requirement as part of the onboarding for any new coach.

5.4.3. Safe Sport Education & Training for Athletes

Student-athletes are presently required to complete a list of items before they can actively participate in Bobcat Athletics. Student-athletes we spoke with remember taking the concussion education training (which appears to be excellent) but their memories of other forms of training were vague. There does not appear to be any centralized process to confirm and track completion of the presently existing training requirements. There is no follow-up scheduled to ensure student-athletes (and coaches) have understood the orientation sessions conducted at the beginning of the season.

When student-athletes were asked specifically about the Rule of Two and their understanding of appropriate coach-athlete interactions, students showed a vague familiarity with the rule and couldn't easily identify what types of conduct by coaches or interactions with athletes would be considered inappropriate. For example, we heard:

- that it is not uncommon for coaches to communicate privately with their student-athletes via WhatsApp.
- Some students receive communications from their coaches through social media platforms
- Some coaches attend social gatherings/parties where drinking (alcohol) is involved, and coaches have advised their athletes not to take pictures or post on social media that the coach is in attendance at the social gathering.

Recommendation 24: Foster and mandate safe sport training for athletes

Require that student-athletes complete Safe Sport training annually in the areas listed below. Ideally, all training is completed in advance of the team's start to the season:

- CAC Safe Sport training
- CAC Rule of Two training
- CCES – Doping on-line training
- Concussion Education
- Pre-tryout medicals upon entry as a BU student-athlete, and annual updates thereafter
- Understanding the waivers and consent forms
- BU Coach Code of Conduct and Student Athlete Code of Conduct

The Committee heard there were occasions in the past when Safe Sport-related education sessions were delivered to student-athletes. There appears to be a lack of consensus or understanding as to why sessions were no longer being carried out and which individual or individuals were responsible for initiating or planning the sessions and/or ensuring that such education and training was delivered. Feedback provided by multiple individuals who participated in these sessions recalled a general lack of respect or regard for the sessions by some, making it challenging for all participants to fully engage and it was suggested that some coaches would not take the sessions seriously, leading to student-athletes not taking it seriously, leading to facilitators feeling less motivated to conduct future sessions.

It appears one of the last attempts at conducting training for each team occurred in approximately the 2016-2017 season, where each team received sexual violence and bystander training. A notable difference between some teams was observed in their level of engagement and receptiveness of the

training. For the most part, it was observed that coaches were present at the training but offered little support or leadership in ensuring that their team participated respectfully and professionally.

Recommendation 25: Create a staff position or include safe sport oversight within existing position

Appoint a senior staff leader who is responsible for keeping informed regarding the continually evolving landscape related to Safe Sport. It is recommended that this individual be a member of the Safe Sport Committee and be involved in the development and presentation of educational material, or at least delegating such responsibilities and maintaining oversight that such responsibilities are being fulfilled.

Update mandatory orientation sessions at the start of each year to include content on Safe Sport, the Rule of Two, and examples of typical coach-athlete interactions. Safe Sport content can be routinely included in other student-athlete education meetings (e.g., team meetings, student-university administration committee meetings, etc.) to ensure widespread distribution and conversations. Bobcat Athletics should monitor attendance to ensure all student-athletes annually attend these sessions. Sessions could be updated from year-to-year (to reduce redundancy) and include student-athlete presenters.

To ensure the education and training is effectively received by those taking it and not simply an action performed to “check the box”, create clear communication on the Rule of Two and ensure all student-athletes and coaches understand its rationale and application. Use scenarios and/or FAQs to provide examples of typical coach-athlete interactions to ensure everyone is on the same page in terms of appropriate behaviour. In addition to making Rule of Two communications available on coach and/or student-athlete portals, these communications could include a new Safe Sport section on the Bobcat Athletics website, with information and resources, that can be hyperlinked to the Student-Athlete handbook.

Additional training and opportunities for engagement and continued learning on a broad variety of topics that revolve around Safe Sport should be conducted throughout the school year in group sessions with coaches, staff, and student-athletes so all participants understand the standards expected of them and others. The method of delivery (for example utilizing a full or portion of a team’s training session is dedicated to Safe Sport training) can be discussed and decided based on what is most feasible for the department and teams, in collaboration with the individuals delivering the content. Additional training and education could be delivered in the following areas:

- discrimination, harassment, and sexualized violence
- bystander intervention
- mental health and well-being
- food and nutrition wellness

5.5. Screening

The Committee understands that some, but not all members of BU teams undergo some form of criminal record check and/or child abuse registry check.

Other than what is noted in other sections of this Report, the Review did not focus on the recruitment/hiring of athletic staff and coaches. Nevertheless, it is prudent to advise that it has become a leading practice at Canadian universities and across Canadian sport organizations to implement screening measures on coaches, including conducting vulnerable sector checks. The failure to conduct checks on all persons involved with BU teams poses risk to the University in hiring individuals who have a known history of mistreating others, especially minors or athletes in other environments, where such information could be ascertained with reasonable due diligence.

Recommendation 26: Conduct Criminal Record Checks on all appropriate individuals

If not already in place, it is advisable, from a risk perspective, that the University develop a screening policy that identifies when and how coaches (or other individuals in a position of authority over students) will be screened as a requirement to participate in university athletics. The screening process should identify which individuals will be subject to Criminal Record/Vulnerable Sector Checks, and require such checks for all current BU members, as appropriate, and as a condition of employment for any new hires. The screening process should also impose an ongoing obligation on individuals screened to disclose any potential changes to the results available from such checks to the University following the initial screening.

5.6. Receiving and Responding to Complaints related to concerns within Athletics

It seems training has been sparse or inconsistent for Bobcat Athletics staff, coaches or student-athletes around understanding and recognizing behaviour which could constitute discrimination, harassment or sexual violence. What little training that was reported to the Review Committee seemed to be basic and provided to some student-athletes via Bobcat Athletics staff.

Many Review participants expressed a lack of trust and confidence in the ability of both the Athletics Unit and the University as a whole to adequately receive and respond to complaints related to discrimination, harassment, sexual violence and potential violations of University policy due to their observation of how incidents in the recent past have been handled inside and outside the Athletics Unit.

With higher Safe Sport standards being set nationally and a greater recognition of the power imbalance inherent in the coach-athlete relationship, it is imperative that student-athletes and coaches are educated on healthy coach-athlete relationships, are trained to identify misconduct, and be equipped and empowered to know how to report misconduct. It is important that student-athletes feel safe to report issues they feel require attention and that they will be heard and taken seriously.

Furthermore, a key gap identified with respect to the complaints process both within the Athletics Unit and the University generally, is that the current system allows for complaints to be received by various individuals without adequate mechanisms in place to ensure that complaints received are being recorded and properly supervised and/or reviewed by multiple individuals to ensure complaints are being both promptly and appropriately dealt with.

A breakdown in communication among members tasked with overseeing the administration of various BU policies could result in a complaint being addressed under the process set out in one policy where another policy may have been more appropriate for handling the complaint, based on the nature of the

complaint. A lack of oversight could also result in a complaint not being promptly dealt with at all or dismissed prematurely without adequate investigation.

The Review Committee also heard there can be considerable confusion with respect to who determines how a complaint should be resolved. In an effort to offer a 'trauma-informed' process, complainants were given some autonomy with determining their desired outcome, which may have included advising BU staff administering a complaint which policy should govern their complaint. At the same time, some student-athletes who have experienced the complaints process have described the process as confusing and not being fully informed of their options throughout the process.

While some deficiencies exist around clarity of the complaints process generally, the Committee heard very positive aspects of the process in terms of members of the University involved in the processes who play very supportive roles to students when students faced negative experiences and raised concern to university officials. At the same time, however, a lack of confidence has been expressed by student-athletes on multiple teams regarding bringing complaints forward to leadership within Athletics.

Several student-athletes expressed concern that the Athletics Unit have not set a culture where athletes are encouraged to speak up, and instead the impression is that coaches will be defended, supported, and "believed" over and above concerns raised by student-athletes. This sentiment is a result primarily of observing how the incident involving the Women's Soccer team was discussed and addressed even following the results of the external investigation. Given the lack of trust in the leadership, some student-athletes advised they did not feel comfortable speaking up to the leadership because the leadership seemed too supportive of coaches and not all students.

Review participants commented,

"If I was a student athlete and had a problem and I needed to go find someone in the office, there is no one that documents that the student came looking [for support]. If [the AD] isn't in his office, there is no key point of contact of who to go to. It's not super accessible. Falls through the cracks. Who is monitoring?"

"There is no transparency. Our University has to change or we will get the same incidents happening again."

Recommendation 27: Formalize independent complaint management process

In addition to Recommendations related to training under sections 5.4.2 and 5.4.3, Brandon University should develop and provide training for all coaches and student-athletes on areas of discrimination, harassment, and sexualized harassment/violence on an annual basis. The training should be group-specific, and student-athletes should be separate from the coaching, training and athletics staff.

Until such time as a more permanent solution can be developed and implemented (see [Recommendation 16:](#)), Brandon University should appoint an individual outside of Bobcat Athletics (ex. Dean of Students) for students to speak to confidentially to raise code of conduct concerns or complaints. This individual should have a clear understanding of BU policies and procedures as well as knowledge of both the coaches and student-athletes codes of conduct. This person needs to be trained in managing complaints and know where to direct students for additional support. Ideally, a long-term

vision for Athletics might be for BU to create a specific Unit that receives and responds to all concerns across the University. But, until such time, BU needs to provide a safe and competent alternative to student-athletes, specifically.

Develop a clear process for any member of the Athletics Unit to report confidentially an incident or potential violation of BU policy or department policy (ex. Codes of conduct) outside of the Athletics Unit. The process should identify the primary point(s) of contact (i.e., an individual or small group of appropriate individuals) to receive complaints and/or be made aware of all complaints. The primary point(s) of contact should be adequately trained and/or are equipped to identify which policies apply and the appropriate avenue to pursue based on the nature of the complaint. There should be at least two designated individuals responsible for knowing the existence of a complaint and in communication with each other to determine the most appropriate avenue for addressing the complaint and to ensure the complaint is being investigated to the extent appropriate in the circumstance.

Members of BU Athletics, including student-athletes, coaches, staff, and faculty should be educated on the complaints process, once developed/improved. Through the BU Safe Sport Committee, and in furtherance of communicating their commitment to Safe Sport, Athletics should ensure student-athletes especially are encouraged to bring concerns forward without fear of retaliation or fear that their complaint will not be taken seriously.

5.7. Student Leadership

The Committee understands there is currently no student-athlete involvement in the BU student union. The student union would love to see representation from them and would love a greater alliance with student-athletes to ensure their interests are being served as students.

One student athlete noted, "Our coach prefers us to hold each other accountable. It means more if leadership comes from teammates than from the coach. At the beginning of the season, we meet as a team with the coach but during the season the teammates hold each other accountable. It comes from whole team."

The Committee also heard that with respect to other teams, the Coach heavily influences team culture and there is a desire by some student-athletes to play a more positive leadership role in decision-making.

Recommendation 28: Provide additional mechanism for greater athlete engagement

Consider giving student-athletes a greater collective voice and influence in decision-making within Athletics through a student-athlete leadership group, whereby an appointed (or elected) group of student-athletes with representation from each team can be tasked with representing the interests of student-athletes and discussing with university and/or Unit leaders, in a structured format, relevant issues and decisions within Athletics. Varsity leadership groups can serve several purposes and are considered a best practice at Canadian universities. One example is the [Queen's University Varsity Leadership Council](#).

5.8. Oversight & Accountability

The Committee heard that negative experiences related to Safe Sport have been brought forward in confidence to some University officials. Many complainants come forward in confidence out of fear for negative repercussions and instead may seek support and accommodations (academic or otherwise) without wanting to make a formal complaint against another member of the BU community. In situations where accommodations are put in place for complainants to avoid having to interact with the individual complained about, the problem arises when there are insufficient mechanisms in place to monitor the situation, leaving a complainant vulnerable to arrangements not being adequately enforced, resulting in a breakdown of the accommodation and the burden placed back on the complainant.

5.9. Evaluation and Measurement of Progress

As noted, the Review Committee would have preferred a greater level of engagement with student-athletes from all teams to inform the Committee's Findings and Recommendations. Many student-athletes who participated in the Review shared their experiences as a Bobcat and overall described their experiences as positive. Others expressed mixed feelings with both positive and negative experiences, which were largely influenced by who their coach was that season. That said, we did not hear from enough student-athletes to make any broader conclusions about the "student-athlete experience" overall. For that reason, the following recommendation is highly recommended:

Recommendation 29: Undertake an anonymous survey for student-athletes on Bobcat experience and satisfaction

The University should consider undertaking, within the next 18 months, a widespread, anonymous student-athlete survey (questionnaire) to assess the student experience and satisfaction with coaching and team culture. This survey/questionnaire could be planned through the Safe Sport Committee and/or with the assistance of an external party/organization with expertise in conducting such an evaluation. Focus groups or interviews with student-athletes could also be incorporated into the survey for deeper understanding of the data collected through the questionnaire. This survey would serve as a form of performance evaluation for coaches and can then be used to measure progress, at least every 18-24 months.

6. ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UNIVERSITY AT LARGE

While outside the scope of the Review, there were a few items raised to the Committee by Review participants that the Committee felt were worthwhile to note, for Brandon University's consideration.

Additional Recommendations:

Recommendation 30: Undertake a university-wide student satisfaction survey

Further to [Recommendation 29](#), it may also be worthwhile for Brandon University to undertake a university-wide student satisfaction survey, if none has been executed recently, to assess student satisfaction with their instructors/professors across all departments/faculties.

One Review participant commented, "*this isn't just an Athletics problem; it is a University-wide problem*".

While outside the scope of this review, the Committee heard concerns regarding issues of harassment and discrimination in other departments and faculties, including the Faculty of Health Studies. The concerns raised were primarily involving the abuse of authority by some professors and the reluctance of students to report issues out of fear of retaliation by their professors. There is also a concern for international students, who fear that filing a complaint could jeopardize their student visa. Thus, like the athlete-coach relationship, there is a great concern with respect to the power imbalance between student and professor, which should be further analyzed.

Recommendation 31: Undertake a Policy Review of the *Sexualized Violence Policy*, the *Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy*, the *Violence Prevention Policy* and the *Safety and Health Policy*

The University should consider forming a committee to review the *Sexualized Violence Policy*, the *Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy*, the *Violence Prevention Policy* and the *Safety and Health Policy* to ensure there are no conflicts and that there are synergies and alignment between all policies.

Like any institution, policies are created at different times and are not always cross-referenced with pre-existing policies to ensure alignment and consistency. This can lead to confusion, a general lack of understanding by the BU community of how the policies operate vis-à-vis each other, and potential conflict between policies.

Recommendation 32: Return the Sexual Violence Prevention and Education Coordinator position to a full-time role and focus on consistent, on-going campus training and education

BU should consider returning this position to a full-time role and focus on consistent, on-going campus training and education.

BU could initially set a 3-year term position to avoid placing the position within the faculty association. This role should support all students (student-athletes, residence advisors, indigenous students, student's association etc.) as well as the greater campus community (faculty, staff, executive). With better education and a greater understanding of what services and support are offered, there is a high probability that BU will see an increase in members of the community feeling safe enough to disclose their experiences. While increased reporting can be difficult to process, opening the lines of communication and creating a safe environment should be considered a positive step toward addressing sexualized violence at BU and in the community of Brandon.

Recommendation 33: Reinstate the Sexual Assault Advisory Committee

The Committee could work with the SVPE Coordinator to create a campus strategy for training, education and awareness across campus. The Review Committee heard this advisory committee was initially created by Brandon University to develop and implement the *Sexual Violence Policy* but that the advisory committee, for whatever reason, has not met in three years. While not to overburden individuals who may be involved with this committee and potentially the Safe Sport Committee, discussions should be had around how to efficiently and optimally ensure that training, education, and awareness-raising around both sexual violence and Safe Sport are undertaken and executed.

Recommendation 34: Consider a reporting structure that is the same for both the Diversity and Human Rights Officer and Sexual Violence Prevention and Education Coordinator positions

The Diversity and Human Rights Officer (reporting to Human Resources) and the Sexual Violence Prevention and Education Coordinator (reporting to the VP, Academic) need to work extremely close together; BU should consider a reporting structure that is the same for both positions. If Brandon University believes that student/staff support is the key priority, then BU could consider creating an Office of Safe Disclosure, have both roles reside in the office and reporting through to the Dean of Students.

Recommendation 35: Revise the process flowchart for the Discrimination and Harassment Prevention procedures

The flowchart should be updated to include a pathway that responds to a scenario where a complaint is deemed to involve sexual misconduct/violence. Having a pathway clearly identified in the flowchart could help avoid mis-identifying certain complaints and/or re-characterizing a complaint when it evolves into one that involves sexual harassment/violence.

The Review Committee understands there are currently different routes a complaint may take within the University depending on how it is characterized. For example, an incident seen to be involving sexual violence will trigger the *Sexualized Violence Policy*, which then calls for an external investigation to be

conducted; whereas an incident assessed as a discrimination/harassment complaint would normally be addressed under the *Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy*.

The Review Committee found no notable concerns with either BU's *Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy*, *Sexualized Violence Policy*, or the 'Guide to Internal Investigations at Brandon University'. However, it is not entirely clear whether, in practice, these documents are supported by adequate communications and/or training within Athletics to ensure individuals in the Athletics know what role, if any, they are expected to play when they become aware of an incident or a concern of a student-athlete or other member of the Unit.

Recommendation 36: Consider creating an AVP Students position and review both the division and the present reporting structure.

With approximately 25 direct reports, the Dean of Students position is extremely difficult to manage and the present incumbent works tirelessly to fulfill the role. If BU sees merit in some of the Review Committee's structural reorganization recommendations, they should consider creating an AVP Students position and review both the division and the present reporting structure.

7. CONCLUSION

Brandon University and Bobcat Athletics seem to have a very special connection to the city of Brandon. The athletics programs are well respected and contribute to the community in a very positive way. Many, if not most, Review participants participated in this Review because they care deeply about Brandon University and Bobcat Athletics and were all motivated to be involved in positive change. The fact that BU commissioned this Report, reinforces its commitment to both Brandon and to providing a safe, secure environment where members of the community can study, work and play.

The Review Committee feels strongly that coordinated communication and meaningful engagement will be keys to the successful implementation of the Recommendations outlined in this report. At the outset of the Review, some members of BU Athletics only found out about the Review for the first time when it was referenced in BU's written apology made available to the public on BU's website. These individuals were not clear about the University's intentions for the Review and were skeptical and guarded in their participation, which may have also contributed to a reluctance, primarily by student-athletes, to participate. The confusion by some about the purpose of the Review and lack of clear communication and coordination between the University and Athletics is an example of how positive efforts to effect change can be stifled when members of the campus community are reluctant or hesitant to actively participate in these efforts without understanding the University's good intentions and having clarity around why they should be participating.

Many Recommendations, to be successfully implemented, will require input and meaningful participation from a diverse range of members of the campus community; for this reason, the Review Committee encourages open lines of honest communication and full campus engagement where a commitment to making lasting improvements is evident.

Sport in Canada has been under the microscope lately and publicly reported incidents of athlete maltreatment are negatively impacting teams and institutions' reputations. The reality is, an emphasis on Safe Sport is long overdue in all sports in Canada and is already an emerging way of life for the next generation of athletes in post-secondary education. The Committee believes the Safe Sport Blueprint (see [Appendix F -](#)) is an excellent guide to creating, implementing, and evaluating a successful BU Safe Sport plan. If Brandon University commits to taking the time to create and implement a Safe Sport Plan, customized to BU values, the University will, in the years to come, be able to proudly market itself as being at the forefront of leading practices for university athletics in Canada.

The Review Committee's Recommendations with respect to operations within Bobcat Athletics and the HLC can position the Unit to function more successfully. More formalized meetings and documentation, a functional strategic plan reviewed on a regular basis, clearly understood roles, responsibilities, and standards for behavior, and regular performance reviews will give BA/HLC staff a clearer picture and roadmap of where the Unit wants to be and how it intends to get there.

Finally, the Recommendations aimed more broadly around the University at large with respect to reporting structure, a campus-wide policy review, and the reinstatement of previous committees and positions are suggested as ways BU can demonstrate its commitment to living by its values and taking complaints seriously.

Once a renewed commitment is placed on the importance of a safe and inclusive campus community, all faculty, staff, students, and other members of the University will know what is expected of them for fostering such an environment and that a failure to do so will have consequences.

The Review Community thanks you for inviting us into your campus community, allowing us to learn about Brandon University and its Bobcat community, and for encouraging us to challenge the University to take its commitments to the next level!

Appendix A - External Review Committee Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference

Review of Brandon University Athletics

Review Committee

Brandon University believes it is the right of all students and employees to study and work in an environment free of discrimination, harassment, sexual violence, and violence in all its forms, and is committed to cultivating an environment that ensures the safety and security of all members of the BU community. Important issues have been identified within our Athletics environment and these issues require further consideration and action. A Review of the student athlete experience at Brandon University will be conducted by a three-person Review Panel composed of one Athletic Director (or former Director), one Dean or Vice-President of Students who has responsibility for Athletics (or former Dean or Vice-President) and one reviewer with specific expertise in harassment, discrimination, violence and personal development of athletes.

This Review was initiated by Brandon University's senior leadership for the purpose of exploring several key objectives, as outlined below. The focus of the Review is to ensure that BU Athletics follows leading practices in matters of harassment, discrimination, violence and sexual violence, respect in sport, student-athlete codes of conduct, and overall student-athlete personal development. In considering these issues, we are seeking best practice in: education; prevention; policies; processes (specific to complaints and effective responses); reporting structures; and oversight in the program. The scope is to cover student-athletes, coaches, staff and Athletic Directors involved with any Athletics programs over the last 5-10 years, in U Sports and MCAC leagues.

The Review will examine and make recommendations for improvement to ensure high expectations for behaviour, safety, and oversight are being met by all athletic teams and athletic staff.

Objectives of the Review

- Listening to student athletes' experiences (specifically in relation to discrimination, harassment, sexual violence, microaggressions, safety, inclusion, etc.) and their perception of the culture within their team and within Athletics.
- Examining student supports, programs, education/training, etc. to identify any gaps that may negatively impact the student athlete experience. Is there any reason these supports should be different for different league play?
- Examining coach supports, oversight, training, etc. to identify any gaps that may negatively impact student athlete or athletics staff experience.
- Examining University policies, processes and organizational structures, within Athletics and within the University, that may impact the student athlete and athletics staff experience. Effectiveness should consider awareness of athletes and staff of such policies, access to safe and effective outlets for complaints, and ensuring compliance to policies and practices by University management.
- Examining mechanisms for addressing complaints through informal and formal means of dispute resolution and recommending areas for improvement.

- Examining best practice to ensure student-athletes on all Athletics teams have access to a person of authority of the same gender as the student-athletes. Related to this question is to examine best practice for access to an advocate for complainants in the event of a complaint to ensure effective action on the complaint.
- Examining conflict of interest and conflict of commitment that may exist and impact the student athlete and athletics staff experience.
- Examining the overall culture within Athletics, (e.g., leadership, goals, shared vision) and the extent to which Athletics fosters an inclusive environment.
- Recommending areas for improvement in all aspects of the above objectives to foster a culture of inclusion and safety for all student-athletes.

Appendix B - External Review Committee Member Bios

Steve Fitterer

Steve has worked in post-secondary education for over 30 years, most recently as the Vice President, Student Affairs and Campus Life at Mount Royal University in Calgary Alberta. Presently, he is the co-owner of the S&L Group where he offers coaching and consulting services to post-secondary institutions and professionals looking to advance in their careers.

Steve graduated from the University of Victoria while playing varsity volleyball. He also has a certificate in University Management from the University of Manitoba and attended the Institute for Educational Management in the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University.

Melissa Knox

Melissa is a lawyer practising primarily in employment, human rights, and sports law. Melissa's legal experience in the both the criminal justice system and the civil sector litigating cases related to child sexual abuse, assault and sexual assault, and harassment and discrimination has motivated her to support organizations in being proactive in developing and maintaining safe and healthy environment for the prevention of harmful and discriminatory behaviour and practices.

Melissa graduated with Highest Honours from Carleton University with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree in Human Rights and Law while playing varsity soccer, and thereafter gained her law degree from Canada's "Access to Justice" law school, Windsor University, Faculty of Law. Melissa holds a master's degree in International Sport Law.

Sandy Slavin

Sandy served as the Executive Director of Athletics, Recreation Services and Facilities at the University of Lethbridge for over 20 years, retired 2015. She served on the U SPORTS eligibility and AFA committees for over 10 years and is currently contracted by CWUAA as the ERO (eligibility review officer) and Discipline Manager (process and policy role).

Appendix C - List of Information Requested and/or Reviewed

- a. Final external investigation report which led to the Review (redacted where appropriate)
- b. BU Organizational structure / charts
- c. Full Bobcat Athletics organizational charts – with job descriptions including any assistant or volunteer coaching positions that may exist.
- d. Collective Bargaining Agreements applicable to Bobcat Athletics and information on employment status with various members of Athletics
- e. Mission, vision and values of Bobcat Athletics
- f. Any strategic planning documents that pertain to the Athletics department
- g. Bobcat Athletics budget – financial costs for administration, team budgets and scholarship funding for each sports team (both USport, MCAC and Club where applicable).
- h. Handbooks and codes of conduct – for student athletes, coaching staff and the athletics department.
- i. Dispute resolution mechanisms (complaint procedures, discipline and appeals policies etc.) that are in place both at BU and within Bobcat Athletics.
- j. Education/Training documents or resources (ex. courses, PowerPoint presentations, guides etc.) focusing on education, training or preparing coaches, staff and student athletes in the following topics:
 - i. Safe Sport
 - ii. Hazing
 - ii. Sexual violence
 - iii. Discrimination, harassment, and/or anti-racism
 - iv. Concussions
 - v. Bystander Intervention
 - vi. Diversity and inclusion
 - vii. Anti-doping
 - viii. mental health
- k. A list of all education and training that is mandatory for students-athletes, staff, and/or coaches to complete
- l. Athletics councils or committees – any terms of reference and/or annual reports
- m. University-wide policies – human rights, harassment, safe space, safe disclosure, violence or sexualized violence
- n. Evaluation forms or other methods by which students can provide feedback to BU on their coaches (ex. coach evaluations), on BU Athletics, etc.

- o. Job description templates/summaries for Head Coaches and Assistant Coaches and performance evaluation schemes
- p. Documents showing any recruitment, hiring, and screening processes for coaching staff prior to their being hired
- q. Any demographic data showing the gender breakdown of staff and coaching staff per team (and any other demographic information collected).

Appendix D - On-Site Visit Review Timetable

**ATHLETIC REVIEW TIMETABLE
HLC, CLASSROOM 001**

June 13 th		June 14 th		June 15 th	
Name	Time	Name	Time	Name	Time
David Docherty	8:30 – 8:45	Student Athletes (Rookies)	8:30 – 9:30	Student Rep	9:00 – 9:30
PEC (Scott/Kristen/Kofi)	8:45 – 9:15	Head Coaches (USport) (Gil/Lee/Grant/James)	9:30 – 9:50	Scott	10:00 – 10:30
Scott	9:30 – 9:45	Gil	10:00 – 10:20		
Scott & Susan	10:00 – 10:30	Lee	10:30 – 10:50		
HR (Cheryl, Kristen & Carla)	10:30 – 11:30	Grant	11:00 – 11:20		
Student Athletes (Captains & Veterans)	11:30 – 12:30	James	11:30 – 11:50		
Russ	1:30 – 2:30	Athletic staff (Matt, Tyler, Schad, Sara, Kevin & Jeremy)	1:00 – 2:00		
Katie	3:00 – 3:30	Head Coaches (MCAC) (Danielle/Glen)	2:00 – 2:20		
Open time for Individual students	3:30 – 5:00	Danielle	2:30 – 2:50		
		Glen	3:00 – 3:20		
		Assistant Coaches	3:30 - 4:30		
		Alumni Athletes	4:30 – 6:00		

BU Athletic Staff Zoom link (June 14 from 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.)

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://brandonu-ca.zoom.us/j/93237436081?pwd=M3lnZTlNbnE4TVZZbDZBb2Q5dGM4Zz09>

BU Assistant Coaches Zoom link (June 14 from 3:30 - 4:30 p.m.)

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://brandonu-ca.zoom.us/j/98341799792?pwd=bUh5MlA0Rml1TjhIZGh3bzVuZFRVUT09>

BU Alumni Athletes Zoom link (June 14 from 4:30 - 6:00 p.m.)

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://brandonu-ca.zoom.us/j/91943492471?pwd=aXh2NmZMN2dPS3pMRjZoNnVxK0lFdz09>

Appendix E - List of all Recommendations (in numerical order)

- Recommendation 1: Conduct a risk assessment
- Recommendation 2: Ensure greater clarity on processes
- Recommendation 3: Update social media guidelines and ensure they are reviewed
- Recommendation 4: Finalize a strategic plan for the Athletics & HLC Unit
- Recommendation 5: Formalize and monitor adherence to policies to ensure consistency
- Recommendation 6: Review, update and communicate job descriptions and written agreements
- Recommendation 7: Evaluate, monitor and communicate performance for all Athletics and HLC staff
- Recommendation 8: Implement an independent coach evaluation process
- Recommendation 9: Review organizational structure
- Recommendation 10: Ensure equitable treatment for all teams
- Recommendation 11: Review financial commitment and ensure minimum standard is maintained to ensure safe sport expectations are met
- Recommendation 12: Review and communicate conflict of interest policy to ensure compliance
- Recommendation 13: Communicate the range of student athlete support services
- Recommendation 14: Communicate mental health support
- Recommendation 15: Maintain support of academic advisors
- Recommendation 16: Create a Safe Discloser Officer position
- Recommendation 17: Develop a Safe Sport Plan
- Recommendation 18: Strike a Safe Sport Committee
- Recommendation 19: Develop a Safe Sport Communications and Engagement Strategy

- Recommendation 20: Create Safe Sport tools, templates, codes of conduct and education materials
- 20 a. develop a coach Handbook
 - 20 b. Develop a Coaches Code of Conduct
 - 20 c. Develop a set of BU team rules -- a set of minimum standards that will apply to all BU teams – and incorporate into the coach and athlete handbooks
 - 20 d. Identify and incorporate safe-sport related policies into the student and coach handbooks
- Recommendation 21: Ensure coaches are trained and consistently communicating with athletes
- Recommendation 22: Make coach education mandatory
- Recommendation 23: Foster and normalize the importance of a safe sport culture
- Recommendation 24: Foster and mandate safe sport training for athletes
- Recommendation 25: Create a staff position or include safe sport oversight within existing position
- Recommendation 26: Conduct Criminal Record Checks on all appropriate individuals
- Recommendation 27: Formalize independent complaint management process
- Recommendation 28: Provide additional mechanism for greater athlete engagement
- Recommendation 29: Undertake an anonymous survey for student-athletes on Bobcat experience and satisfaction
- Recommendation 30: Undertake a university-wide student satisfaction survey
- Recommendation 31: Undertake a Policy Review of the *Sexualized Violence Policy*, the *Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy*, the *Violence Prevention Policy* and the *Safety and Health Policy*
- Recommendation 32: Return the Sexual Violence Prevention and Education Coordinator position to a full-time role and focus on consistent, on-going campus training and education
- Recommendation 33: Reinstate the Sexual Assault Advisory Committee

- Recommendation 34: Consider a reporting structure that is the same for both the Diversity and Human Rights Officer and Sexual Violence Prevention and Education Coordinator positions
- Recommendation 35: Revise the process flowchart for the Discrimination and Harassment Prevention procedures
- Recommendation 36: Consider creating an AVP Students position and review both the division and the present reporting structure.

Appendix F - BU Safe Sport Plan – BLUEPRINT

1) Compose a BU Safe Sport Committee (Recommendation 17)

- a) Potential training for members
- b) Communication of role

2) Develop Safe Sport Standards (Recommendation 20)

- a) Policies, Handbooks/Guides, Codes of Conduct
 - i) Student athlete Handbook
 - (1) a set of minimum standards that will apply to all BU teams
 - ii) **Student Athlete Code of Conduct**
 - iii) **New coach Handbook**
 - (1) a set of minimum standards that will apply to all BU teams
 - iv) **Coaches Code of Conduct**
 - v) Identify **safe-sport related policies**
 - vi) Create uniform communication practices with respect to how coaches communicate certain decisions

3) Develop Safe Sport Education & Training for Coaches and Athletics Staff (Recommendation 22)

- a) Required Training Coaches
- b) Recommended Memberships
- c) Yearly continuing education session recommendations
- d) Tracking Mechanisms

4) Safe Sport Education & Training for Athletes (Recommendation 24)

- a) Required Annual Safe Sport Training
- b) Updated Student Orientation Program
- c) Safe Sport Education & Training for Athletes
- d) Tracking Mechanisms

5) Discrimination, Harassment and Sexual Violence Training Plan for Student-Athletes and Coaches (Recommendation 32)

6) Develop Screening Requirements (Recommendation 26)

- a) Coaches
- b) Volunteers
- c) Student staff

7) Receiving and Responding to Complaints (Recommendation 16)

- a) Identify where complaints are to be brought to and managed
- b) Process for reporting
- c) Flow chart for managing complaints (**Recommendation 35**)
 - i) Code – Discrimination, aligned with BU policy
 - ii) Code – Harassment, aligned with BU policy
 - iii) Code – Sexual Misconduct, Sexual Violence, aligned with BU policy