

On Campus at Brunswick Community College

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Every fall, Brunswick Community College (BCC) welcomes student athletes on campus. Hailing from North Carolina, South Carolina, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and as far away as Maine, Colorado and California, these students come to BCC to continue their education while playing a sport on the collegiate level. While at the college, however, these individuals generate campus spirit, excellence in the classroom and support for our community at large.



Dr. Susanne Adams

Campus spirit

One of only 17 community colleges in North Carolina that offers athletics, BCC engages in collegiate competition in four sports: men's and women's basketball, volleyball, and baseball. The men's basketball team has been in place for 15 years, women's basketball for eight years, and baseball and volleyball teams for seven years. The Dinah E. Gore Fitness & Aquatics Center is home to BCC athletics. At the center, members see our young athletes condition and train as well as compete against other community colleges throughout Region 10 of the National Junior Collegiate Athletic Association (NJCAA) which includes Virginia, South Carolina, and Florida. Dr. Sybil Burgess, BCC faculty and the academic coach for the women's basketball team, describes a recent home game: "The girls had been trailing at least ten points all evening; however, the spirit of the crowd was electrifying. Cheering from the bench kept the women in the game. During the final seconds of play, the Dolphins sank a nail-biting two-pointer for the win." Dr. Burgess also explains how the spirit of camaraderie on the court and on the field extends to the classroom: "Student athletes wear sports attire to class; they become visual symbols of the Dolphins, the college's mascot. Connections and relationships are made when faculty and non-athletes attend and discuss games. Associations like this between students is difficult to inspire on a rural commuter campus." Also symbolic of strong campus spirit and engagement is the new "voice" of BCC athletics: Paul Milles, English instructor and Early College High School Liaison.

Excellence in the classroom

Student athletes at Brunswick Community College are held to high academic standards. Athletic director and baseball coach Robbie Allen said a student cannot succeed in his/her sport unless the success extends to the classroom. Although NJCAA standards require athletes to maintain a minimum GPA of 2.0 and a full schedule (12 or more semester hours) to remain eligible, Coach Allen expects more: a minimum GPA of 2.5. To achieve this goal, all coaches hold mandatory study halls during the first semester for freshmen, helping new student athletes establish good study habits and put academic support systems such as tutoring in place from the onset. Some coaches, like Coach Hoskins (volleyball), require mandatory ACE Lab tutoring sessions for the entire team. "Our school work comes first," says California native and freshman volleyball player Alyssa Coe. "That is one reason I chose BCC."

The focus on "academics first" has paid off. In 2014-15, the average GPA of a student athlete rose to 2.735. Moreover, the student athlete graduation rate at BCC was 70 percent in 2013-14 and 73 percent in 2014-15, both higher than the national average. "Student athletes tend to stay to complete their degrees," explains Coach Allen. "A natural support system is created through sports; our players encourage each other to stay in school and to achieve academically." Finally, many student athletes come to BCC with aspirations to graduate and to continue their education and play at a senior institution. In 2014-15, 18 BCC student athletes were afforded the opportunity to do so.

Support for our community

The athletics program at BCC and our student athletes support our local community in two important ways: through community service and economic impact.

Student athletes at BCC are required not only to perform well in the classroom, on the field, or on the court, they must give back to the community — a minimum of 15 hours a semester. Nick Yarbrough, a sophomore third baseman who has signed with Campbell University to play after graduating from BCC in May, says that community service "brings us (players) closer as a team and teaches us hard work and effort." This fall, 25 student athletes have become volunteers for Community In Schools (CIS) of Brunswick County, 12 participated in the Leland Trunk-or-Treat event, 14 volunteered at the Brunswick County Sheriff's Office fall festival and 10 are scheduled to help out at a local food bank every Saturday from now through Christmas. BCC coaches have benchmarked a goal of 3,000 community service hours for this academic year, fall 2015 and spring 2016. Yarbrough says, "Our coaches feel it is important to give back to the community that has supported us and made our athletic programs successful." Since community college athletics in North Carolina cannot be supported by any state funds, the athletic budget for BCC is a compilation of local funds, a percentage of student fees and bookstore receipts, and fund raising. Last year, the Athletic Department raised \$47,000 in support of the program.

BCC athletics and student athletes contribute to the economy of Brunswick County as well. For the 90 percent of BCC athletes who move to Brunswick County just to attend the college, that contribution comes in the form of apartment rentals, food, gas, entertainment and services. For example, 86 student athletes relocated to the area for the 2015 fall semester. These students pay on average \$350.00 a month for a twelve-month lease, totaling approximately \$361,200.00 in rent receipts this year to local apartment owners. Moreover, BCC athletics brings numerous out-of-town teams to Brunswick County each season. In 2015-16, BCC athletic facilities will host 62 home games. Out-of-town fans and players will stay in local hotels, rent beach houses and purchase meals. Finally, Brunswick County and BCC's fine athletic facilities make our area a favorite tournament location. The College regularly hosts a men's and women's basketball

holiday tournament, women's Region 10 sports tournaments, conference tournaments for our local high schools, and multiple baseball tournaments throughout the spring and summer months.

A big win

Athletics at BCC is a big win for our college, its student athletes, and our community. The best part of this victory is the opportunity that athletics affords Brunswick Community College to affect the lives of students who may not otherwise have attended college at all. Coach Allen says, "From the academic support we offer, to the standards we set for our student athletes to help them achieve success both on and off the field, our program focuses on making bright futures. I am blessed to be part of this program and to watch these young men and women grow."

For more information about BCC athletics, contact Allen at 755.7321 or gobccsports.com.

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