

Trifling Title IX

ANOTHER LOOK AT ATHLETICS MANAGEMENT AT USM

The USM football and men's basketball teams enjoyed unprecedented success during the 2011-12 academic year. The football team, under the leadership of Larry Fedora, won 12 of 14 games, including a victory over Nevada in the Sheraton Hawaii Bowl in Dec-2011. Under Larry Eustachy, the men's basketball team compiled a 25-9 record and received the program's first invitation to the NCAA tournament in 20 years. Still, success in these two sports came at a cost, as both coaches departed USM for other venues. In Fedora's case, that meant North Carolina, while Eustachy headed west to Colorado State. What USM fans and other members of the USM family may not know is that the success of these two teams also came during the worst athletics year overall since current USM president Martha Saunders arrived on the scene in May-2007. As of 22-Apr-2012, Golden Eagles sports teams have won just 43.1% of their athletic contests during 2011-12, even with football's 85.7% contribution and men's basketball's 73.5% addition.

Much of the malaise spotlighted by the 43.1% mark has come on the women's side of the ledger, an occurrence that has been covered on numerous occasions by USMNEWS.net reports and columnists. Table 1 below summarizes just how poorly the performance on the women's side has been during this academic year.

Table 1
Women's Sports at USM, 2011-12

| <u>Sport</u> | <u>Winning %</u> | <u>Wins</u> | <u>Losses</u> | <u>Ties</u> |
|---------------|------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| Volleyball | 53.1 | 17 | 15 | 0 |
| Golf | 48.0 | 24 | 26 | 1 |
| Basketball | 41.9 | 13 | 18 | 0 |
| Track & Field | 31.8 | 3 | 7 | 1 |
| Softball | 31.6 | 12 | 26 | 0 |
| Soccer | 27.5 | 4 | 13 | 3 |
| Tennis | 13.6 | 3 | 19 | 0 |
| ALL | 38.3 | 76 | 124 | 5 |

With golf, softball and track & field yet to complete their 2011-12 seasons, only volleyball can report having a winning season during the 2011-12 academic year. Its record, 53.1% (17-15), is only barely above the 50% cut line for such reporting, and sources tell USMNEWS.net that volleyball is still benefitting from the stellar recruiting of its former coach Ricci Luyties, who left after 2009-10. Since then, the on-court records have been diminishing to their current level.

These data show how easy it is for universities to get around Title IX, the federal rule requiring equal representation in athletics across genders. While offering scholarship bases that *reflect* equality, USM administrators can skirt Title IX by shorting women's athletics in terms of recruiting budgets, facilities, equipment purchases, and other administrative support services. In doing so, it would not be uncommon to encounter performance results like those in Table 1 above. Is USM doing such? It is difficult to tell, but the data seem to support such an argument.