

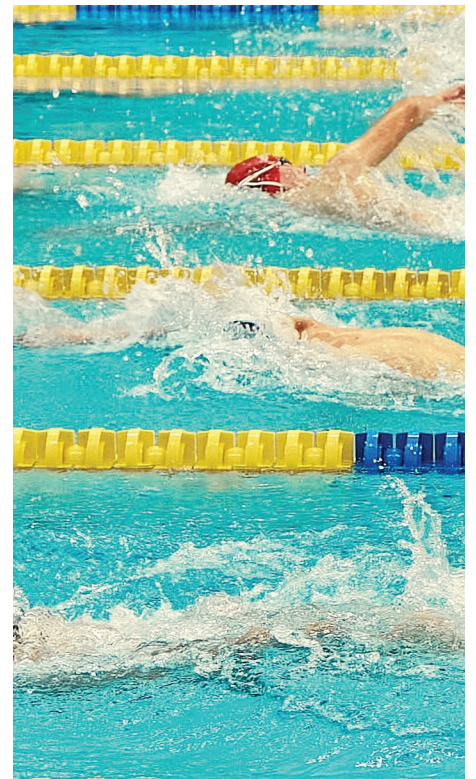


Clean Water and Clean Air in Modern Aquatics Facilities

BY DAVID VINSON, PHD

In 2014, the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) commissioned Dr. Scott Forrester to analyze and interpret the responses of more than 33,500 students who participated in the NIRSA/NASPA Consortium Nationwide Survey. His expansive review of that data set, highlighted in *The Benefits of Campus Recreation* report, reveals that 68 percent of students surveyed reported that campus recreation facilities influenced their decision as to which institution they would attend.

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The report also shows that engaging in recreational activities during these formative years positively influences students' attitudes toward maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Forrester's findings affirm that an overwhelming majority of students attribute health and wellness benefits to their participation in campus recreation facilities, programs, or

services. In fact, nearly 40 percent of respondents indicated they participated three times per week or more, and nearly 80 percent indicated they participated at least one time per week. The findings are revealing, serving as an apt reminder of the impact that campus recreation facilities have on student recruitment and retention.

Across the country, private institutions of higher education have taken the findings to heart and are investing significant time and resources in these facilities not only to create more opportunities for students' health and wellness but to foster an appealing campus culture that may translate to campus-wide economic stability and growth.

Aquatic facilities are an essential component of campus recreation, serving as ideal spaces for the recruitment of students and student-athletes. The versatility of aquatic facilities is partly what makes them so appealing. Students can relax but also exercise with intent, and they can do so individually or in groups. These spaces may serve freshmen orientations, Greek life, collegiate sports, and as a general fitness center for all students. In past decades, university aquatic facilities were designed primarily for student-athletes who exercised and trained vigorously—but modern facilities are now used by a diverse array of students, in addition to faculty and staff. Accordingly, the amenities offered should meet the needs of all rather than a select few. This is reflected in one of the newer trends in modern aquatics programming, which is to design pools with deeper water for better, safer performance in competitive programs, and to provide shallower (almost beach-like entry) water to support recreation programs. Many aquatic facilities now incorporate dozens of water features and pool configurations. These may include a lazy river, beach entry, spray features, bubble benches, lounging ledges, vortexes, rain rings, rope swings, climbing walls, zip lines, movie screens, waterfalls, a band platform, water-fountain features, and even seating areas with Wi-Fi connections and charging stations for those who want to study or collaborate poolside.


Turnover Rates of Different Pool Types

It is not unusual for a modern aquatics facility to offer four different pool types, each with varying water depths and temperatures. Pool types usually include a swimming pool, an adaptive learning pool, a multi-purpose pool, and a spa. Careful consideration of turnover rates is a must if one is to keep aquatic facilities functional, attractive, and clean. Preventative maintenance to accommodate turnover rates is a challenge, however, due in part to the high demand of the facilities. Consider, too,

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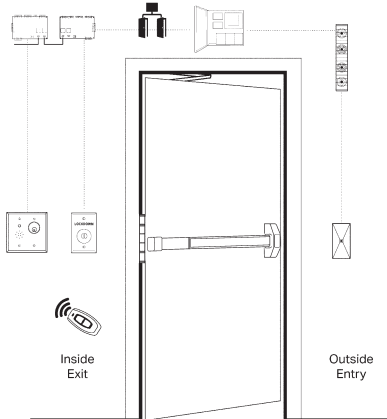



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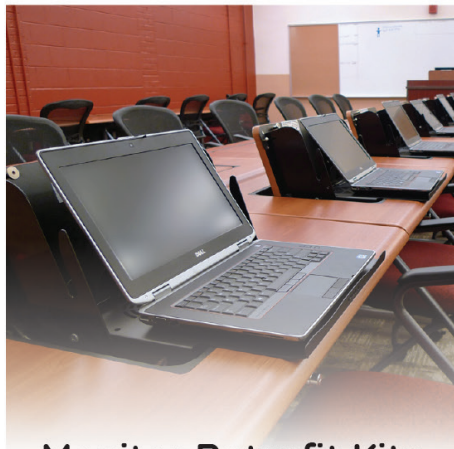
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that more bodies in the water translates to scarcer opportunities to perform preventative maintenance that addresses residue from body oils, sunscreen, and other forms of human debris. A swimming pool which offers water depths of three to 13 feet or deeper and water temperature of 78 to 84 degrees F is required by most states to have water recirculated within six hours or less. But with heavier occupancies, this requirement may prove insufficient; it isn't unusual to see a two- to four-hour turnover rate for a modern recreation pool. A similar challenge applies to adaptive learning pools, multi-purpose pools, and spas. An adaptive learning pool offers water depths of two to eight feet and water temperatures of 82 to 90 degrees F, with a two- to four-hour turnover rate. A multi-purpose pool has a two- to four-hour turnover rate as well, and it has depths up to five feet or greater. Finally, a spa has water depths between three and six feet, a significantly higher temperature rate of 100 to 104 degrees F, and a significantly lower turnover rate of 20 to 30 minutes.

Preventative Maintenance and Innovative Technologies

Smart pool monitoring systems are among the most significant innovations in preventative maintenance. These systems use sensors and other advanced technologies to monitor different aspects of pool water quality, such as pH levels, chlorine levels, and water temperature. All can be monitored from a smartphone for convenience. The monitoring systems notify pool operators if an issue with water quality occurs, allowing them to take prompt action. Some smart pool monitoring systems can be synced with other smart devices, enabling operators to control pool settings remotely. The use of automated pool cleaners is another useful method in preventative maintenance. Recent advances in technology have made automated pool cleaners more efficient and effective. Robotic pool cleaners, for example, are small, wheeled machines that use advanced algorithms to navigate the pool and clean it. They are equipped with an electric motor that creates suction to remove dirt and

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