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Make Your Space Work Harder

A SMARTER STORAGE STRATEGY FOR CAMPUS RECREATION

BY WENGER CORPORATION

Campus recreation facilities are asked to do a lot.

A gym might host intramural basketball one night, open recreation the next afternoon, volleyball later in the week, and a campus event over the weekend. Fitness spaces, fieldhouses, equipment rooms, and multipurpose areas are constantly changing based on who needs them and what is happening that day.

That flexibility is part of what makes campus recreation valuable. It can also make storage a headache.

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Balls, nets, mats, cones, racquets, training gear, event supplies, and seasonal equipment all must go somewhere. And when storage is treated like leftover space instead of part of the facility plan, problems tend to show up quickly. Rooms get crowded. Equipment gets harder to find. Staff spend more time moving things around. Setup and teardown take longer than they should.

For colleges and universities watching budgets closely, the answer is not always more space. Sometimes the better question is much simpler: Are we using the space we already have as well as we could be?

Start With the Workflow

A crowded equipment room does not automatically mean the room is too small.

Sometimes the issue is poor use of vertical space. Sometimes the gear used every day is buried behind things that come out twice a year. Sometimes fixed shelving is holding equipment that really needs to move. In other cases, the room may simply be the result of years of adding one rack, cart, cabinet, or shelving unit at a time.

Before buying anything new, look at how the room actually works.

What equipment gets used every day? What moves from storage to the gym, fieldhouse, or court? What stays put? What needs to be secured? What is seasonal? What takes the most time to find, move, or put away?

Those questions tell you more than a floor plan by itself.

High-use equipment should be easy to reach. Seasonal items can live in less convenient locations. Bulky gear may be better stored vertically. Equipment that moves constantly may make more sense on a cart than on a fixed shelf.

The point is not to squeeze the most equipment into the smallest possible room. The point is to make the room work better for the people using it.

Decide What Should Move and What Should Stay

Campus recreation involves a lot of movement, so mobile storage can be a big help. But that does not mean everything needs wheels.

Fixed storage is often the right answer for items that stay in one location, especially when you can make better use of wall space or organize things that do not need to move often. Mobile storage makes more sense when staff are constantly taking equipment from a storage room to a gym, court, fieldhouse, or activity area.

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That distinction matters because every extra trip, lift, or reshuffle takes time.

If staff have to carry loose equipment back and forth, unload one cart to reach another, or move three things just to get to the one thing they need, the storage system is creating work instead of reducing it.

GearBoss storage systems, including carts, racks, shelving, and workstations, are designed around those kinds of needs. But the larger idea is not about one specific product. It is about figuring out what should move, what should stay fixed, and how quickly staff need to get to each category of equipment.

The storage should support the workflow, not force the workflow to work around it.

Shared Spaces Raise the Stakes

This matters even more in recreation and intramural facilities because the same room

may serve a long list of users.

Intramural leagues rotate. Club sports change. Open recreation shares space with classes, practices, tournaments, and special events. The faster a room can transition from one use to another, the more value the institution gets from that space.

Storage can make those transitions easier or harder.

If equipment can be staged before an activity, moved as a group, and returned to a clear home afterward, staff spend less time resetting the room. Good organization also gives student employees and part-time staff a system they can understand quickly.

That piece is easy to overlook.

A lot of campus recreation operations rely heavily on student workers. The storage

room should not depend on one experienced employee knowing where everything is hidden. It should make sense to the person working the next shift too.

That is where simple, repeatable organization has real value.

Protect the Investment You Already Made

For administrators, there is another reason to pay attention to storage: the equipment has already been purchased.

The institution has already invested in balls, nets, mats, training gear, athletic equipment, and the programs that use them. Storage affects how easy those items are to find, count, move, and protect.

When equipment has a defined place, staff can see what they have. They can tell what is missing. They can identify what is worn



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out instead of buying something new because nobody can find the old one. Equipment is also less likely to be piled up, buried, or repeatedly moved just to reach something else.

And improving storage does not have to mean one large capital project.

In many facilities, a phased approach makes more sense. Start with the area causing the most frustration. Maybe it is one overcrowded equipment room. Maybe it is the lack of mobile storage for intramural equipment. Maybe the problem is unused vertical space. Maybe it is simply a collection of storage pieces that no longer fit how the program operates.

Fixing one bottleneck at a time can make the project easier to budget and easier to evaluate.

It also creates a chance to standardize gradually. A consistent approach to carts, *continued....*



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shelving, and equipment locations is easier for staff to learn than a room full of one-off solutions collected over the years.

Plan for What Comes Next

Campus recreation does not stay the same forever.

Participation changes. New activities show up. Equipment inventories grow. A room designed for one purpose may eventually need to support three.

That is worth considering before making a storage decision.

Look for systems that can be reorganized, expanded, moved, or repurposed as needs change. The goal is not to predict exactly what the program will look like five or ten years from now. It is to avoid creating a solution that only works for today.

That kind of flexibility can be especially valuable in multipurpose facilities, where change is already part of the daily routine.

A Smarter Use of Space

The smartest recreation storage project may not create another square foot of space.

It may simply help a college or university use the space it already owns more intelligently.

That starts with understanding the workflow, separating fixed storage needs from mobile ones, organizing around frequency of use, and giving staff a system that is easy to understand and maintain.

Storage will never be the most visible part of a recreation facility. Most students will probably never think about it when it is working well.

But staff will notice when spaces turn over faster, equipment is easier to manage, and fewer hours are spent working around clutter.

For institutions trying to make thoughtful decisions about facilities and budgets, that is the real opportunity: not just finding a place to put more stuff, but making the space work harder.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Wenger Corporation designs innovative, high-quality solutions for music education, performing arts, theatre, and athletics, helping schools, universities, and organizations create functional, flexible spaces where students, performers, athletes, and communities can thrive.

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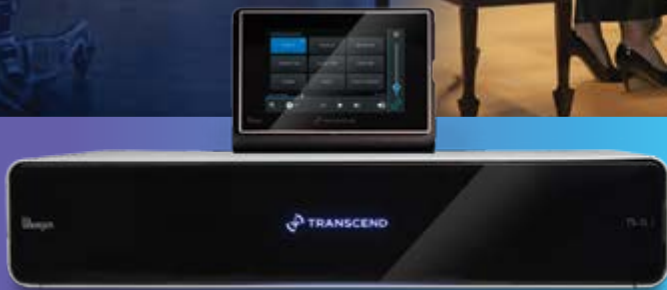


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