



ENHANCING STUDENT SPORT

Re-designing sport to meet new expectations and positively influence the university experience.

Setting the Scene: Why We Reimagined Sport at UniSC

At UniSC Sport & Fitness, we recognised that our approach to student sport had become stagnant, with the same key offerings repeated year after year. It was, in many ways, a “copy and paste” model that no longer reflected the needs or expectations of our student body.

Post-COVID, universities have placed a renewed focus on building sticky campuses- places where students feel connected, engaged, and motivated to return. We saw sport as the perfect vehicle to help rebuild that sense of on-campus community and belonging.

At the same time, we lacked meaningful data to demonstrate the impact of our programs. Poor tracking made it difficult to quantify our value in enhancing the student experience- a growing concern in the context of a shifting SSAF landscape and increased financial scrutiny across the sector.

Between 2023 and 2024, our team also went through significant staff changes. With that came fresh eyes, new energy, and a willingness to question how, and why, we do things.

All of these factors led us to take a step back and reimagine how we deliver sport. The goal was simple: to design sport that is responsive, inclusive, data-informed, and truly impactful on the student journey.

We Love Sport. Do You?

- Launched a digital student sport database during O-Week, capturing student interests via a QR code.
- Data informs program development and SSAF funding allocation, ensuring offerings are student-led and relevant.
- Enabled the introduction of non-traditional and emerging sports to reflect the evolving interests of the student body.

Improving Campus Connection and Visibility

- Weekly pop-up stalls held at high-traffic academic zones to overcome the physical distance between Sport & Fitness facilities and the campus heart.
- Builds on-campus presence, drives awareness, and creates informal engagement opportunities.

Expanding Social Media Footprint

- Implemented consistent and targeted social media content to increase visibility, build community, and celebrate student involvement.
- Promote events, showcases achievements, and drives participation across platforms.

Broadening Participation Opportunities

- Moved beyond a focus on elite teams to offer multiple levels of involvement — from social sport to intervarsity and representative competition.
- Messaging emphasises fun, connection, and belonging to encourage wider student participation.
- SSAF funds distributed more broadly to support inclusion across diverse sports and student cohorts.

Embedding Leadership and Connection at All Campuses

- Appointed staff and student sport contacts at each campus to foster local leadership and shared ownership.
- Strengthens coordination, communication, and on-the-ground engagement across the UniSC network.

Ensuring Equity for Regional and Satellite Campuses

- Delivered initiatives tailored to smaller campuses, ensuring all students have access to meaningful sport experiences.
- Examples include \$50 activity vouchers and partnerships with local facilities like PCYC.

Breaking Down the Stigma: Sport is for Everyone

- Actively challenged the idea that sport is only for athletes by promoting inclusive, low-pressure participation pathways.
- Positioned sport as a key pillar of student wellbeing and connection — not just performance.
- Social sport and intervarsity offerings receive equal emphasis and celebration alongside elite competition.

Creating Real-World Learning Opportunities Through Sport

- Embedded Work Integrated Learning (WIL) into events and programs — involving students as photographers, MCs, event managers, content creators, and more.
- Collected WIL interest via the sport database to match students with opportunities.
- Provided hands-on experience that builds employability, professional skills, and student confidence.

The Critical Ingredient: TIME and PLANNING

- Success across all initiatives has hinged on early planning and consistent communication.
- Strategic lead times have allowed for better recruitment, greater engagement, and smoother delivery.
- Clear, early messaging across multiple channels has ensured students feel informed, included, and excited.
- Investing time in planning has directly contributed to an improved overall student sport experience.



Case Example: Campus Clash – O’Week Semester 1

A flagship cross-campus initiative designed to connect students across all five UniSC campuses through a day of sport and fun.

- All campuses are invited to the Sunshine Coast for a multi-sport “campus vs campus” competition.
- Smaller campuses are topped up with players from larger ones to ensure full participation and inclusivity.
- UniSC funds and coordinates all travel to remove barriers and enable equitable access.
- The day focuses on fun, connection, and campus spirit – not just performance.
- Sponsors like Red Bull and Elite Supps are on-site, enhancing the event atmosphere and student experience.
- WIL students are recruited to photograph, MC, and support event delivery – gaining valuable real-world experience.
- UniSC sporting clubs run and showcase their sports on the day, helping them attract and engage new members.
- The event builds a sticky campus culture by helping students make friends, feel part of the community, and discover new opportunities within our Precinct.
- A key opportunity to showcase UniSC’s Sport & Fitness Precinct, especially to new and international students.



