

# Selling the Message of Sport to University Executives

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**RMIT University**



## Acknowledgement of Country

RMIT University acknowledges the people of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nation on whose unceded lands we conduct the business of the University.

RMIT University respectfully acknowledges their Ancestors and Elders, past and present.

RMIT also acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and their Ancestors of the lands and waters across Australia where we conduct our business.

### Artwork 'Sentient' by Hollie Johnson

Hollie is a Gunaikurnai and Monero Ngarigo woman from Gippsland who graduated from RMIT with a BA in Photography in 2016.

# My sports journey



# Participant, coach, leader

My participation in sport started early...



evolved...

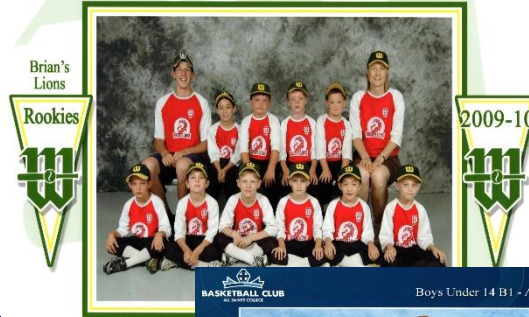


and grew.



I moved into coaching...

WILLETTON BASEBALL CLUB



and it became a passion.



I became a Manager, Board Member and advocate.



# Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology - RMIT

## Some information on sport engagement at RMIT

**King of the Court (Nov 2024)** – International streetball competition hosted at A’beckett. Run by King of the Court and sponsored by Redbull AU, Champion and more!



**Uni of The Court (April 2025)** – First event of it’s kind. Created by RMIT Active in collaboration with King of The Court, a famous streetball competition. Hosted by RMIT Active at our A’beckett Urban Courts in the heart of Melbourne CBD. The day saw unis from across Victoria (Fed Uni, Melbourne Uni, ACU, LaTrobe, Monash, Deakin and more) come together to compete in a 3x3 streetball competition.



### Some key stats on Sports Engagement at RMIT

10k+ unique student engagements across Active Programs

1,000+ students representing Redbacks in Nationals and Rep sports

Esport Community of 5,000+ students on discord

230k+ visitors annually to our Bundoora Sports Precinct

214 WIL placements provided by our Sports Academy including Health Sciences, Education and Business students

43 student led clubs affiliated by RMIT Active boasting 5k+ members.

Tier 1 Pride in Sport status



# The current education landscape



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# Context

All institutions, in Australia and internationally, face challenges:

- Student recruitment
- Finances are tight
- Competition for resources
- Uncertainty

## My advice:

*Selling the Message of Sport to University Executives* needs to be made in this context – alongside every other institutional priority and every other area of worthwhile activity.

*Be strategic* – know your audience, their code of preference, their teams and their networks. Engage them in your activities but appreciate that time is constrained and do not give up at the first diary clash.



# Communicating the value





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# Communicating the value

“What we know is students who exercise regularly – at least 3 times a week – at an intensity of eight times resting (7/9 METS) graduate at higher rates, and earn, on average a full GPA point higher than their counterparts who do not exercise.” *James A Fitzsimmons, University of Nevada, Reno College of Education, 2012*; quoted in The Value of Sport

## 1. Sport as a Strategic Asset

Student (and staff) wellbeing, persistence and retention; Leadership; Employability; Visibility and Alignment with Mission and Values

## 2. Economic and Reputational Benefits

Student recruitment and enrolment; sponsorship and partnership opportunities; university positioning in relation to areas of public debate – in Australia and Overseas

## 3. Data to support decision-making

Gather, track and use data to support the case for sport; use sports participation analytics to make your investment case



# Building the Case



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# Building the Case

## 1. Strategic Priorities vs Sport Balance

Sport is often inter-connected with broader strategic goals – growing disciplinary engagement such as physiotherapy; sports management; media whether in relation to education or research

## 2. Data

Identifying, tracking, sharing insights will help with executive decision-making so taking the time and effort to invest in doing this will potentially pay off in the long run

## 3. Visibility and Community Impact

Sports events often serve as a platform connecting students, alumni and local communities – the King of the Court example at RMIT



# Making the argument



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# Making the argument

“People don’t hire student athletes because they’re stars on a football field... what we find, in every type of employment engagement, is that there are certain traits employers desire – persistence, time management, communication skills, determination, internal motivation.”  
Vin McCaffrey, Founder and CEO, Game Theory Group – quoted in The Value of Sport

## 1. Strategic alignment

Increased focus on completion rates, graduation rates and what graduates are doing 12 months, 3 years out of University. This speaks to the core Education mission of a university.

## 2. Financial justification

There are different types of financial investments required from facilities to support for individual codes to individual events. Demonstrate the cost-benefit for such support.

## 3. Impact

Case studies, stories, hearing student voices can all support institutional reputation.



# Conclusion



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# Things to think about...

- Academic excellence is a key objective of any university
- All universities and increasingly government monitor student persistence, completion, graduation and employment rates
- Research opportunities exist
- Identify your advocates and work with them
- Know your leadership team, their interests and seek to engage them
- Appreciate your institutional context
- Be part of the solution



# Questions?





**Thank you!**

