

El Camino's athletic program boasts success with recruiting efforts

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With one of the largest athletic departments of any two-year college in California, El Camino College is home to nearly 400 student-athletes competing in nearly two dozen sports.

The department's success hinges on funding which, in part, comes from the Associated Students Organization (ASO).

Budget

For the 2022-2023 school year, the athletic department's budget is \$7.9 million, according to records obtained by The Union from the El Camino Community College District Athletic Department.

ASO provided \$135,000 to the athletic department, according to ASO president Jana Abulaban. Abulaban added the ASO determines the allocation of funding for athletics, along with other on-campus programs.

A portion of El Camino's athletic budget is used to pay officials for games and meets, along with athletic equipment, and staffing — all of which have increased in cost. Jeffrey Miera, the Director of Athletics at El Camino College discussed the increase in cost to maintain the athletic program.

"Entry fees have gone up because staffing is more expensive," Miera said. "Officials fees go up periodically. All of the expenses that we have go up."

The budget also funds various subdivisions within the overall athletic department.

Roster numbers and recruitment

El Camino's roster numbers were compared to four other community colleges in the state: Bakersfield College, Pasadena City College, Riverside City College, and City College of San Francisco.

Compared to the other colleges, El Camino enrolls 393 student-athletes competing in 22 sports, including those competing in sports played during the 2022 spring semester. Riverside has 19 sports with over 400 athletes.

The Union made attempts to reach athletic directors from City College of San Francisco, Pasadena City College, and Bakersfield College, but did not receive a response from the colleges.

Payton Williams, Riverside's athletic director, told The Union there have been changes within Riverside's athletics

program in the last 10 years, including the addition of a few sports.

Williams, who has been the athletic director since 2021, has made it a priority to ensure student-athlete success in the classroom. The T.I.G.E.R.S. Program helps students navigate the rigors of academic life.

"We make sure if we see a need, we get it addressed, whether physical, academic, or emotional," Williams said. Mentorship and guidance are provided through coaches, staff members, and counselors as well.

El Camino has produced many athletes who went on play at the four-year level, some professionally, and some who have gone back to El Camino as a coach. Liz Hazell, the current head coach for the women's volleyball team is a former student of El Camino, and played volleyball at the college.

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"It's tough being a student-athlete," Hazell said. "It's hard work."

As a coach, she preaches the importance of using academic resources to allow success in the classroom.

At El Camino, Lofgren's teams have been successful, being one of the top teams in Southern California, and in the state, qualifying for numerous championships over the years.

At El Camino, the Triple A program works in conjunction with the campus library in order to ensure student success, where they can take advantage of academic resources such as tutoring, as well as working on academic assignments.

Dean Lofgren, the coach for the cross country and track and field programs, is aware the South Bay Promise draws students into the college, which waives enrollment fees for full-time students attending college for first-time high school graduates.

"Students that come from our local high schools that are aware of the South Bay Promise get things going step-by-step counseling, registration," Lofgren said, who initially began as an assistant coach, and later took the reigns as head coach in 1989. "It's a great opportunity for them."

In order to ensure an enrollment increase, Lofgren reaches out to local high schools. High school seniors discover the campus' athletic



Sequoia Gonzales, a freshman with El Camino's cross country team, poses for a photo on the track on Wednesday, Nov. 30. Greg Fontanilla | The Union

facilities through tours given by Lofgren, which plays a factor in a student's decision to enroll at El Camino as a student-athlete.

Sequoia Gonzales, a freshman out of Torrance High School, is a member of El Camino's cross country team. She was recruited by Lofgren to run at the college.

Part of her decision in wanting to attend El Camino was the available resources the college has for student-athletes.

"Definitely the FYE Program," said Gonzales, referring to the First Year Experience Program, as well as the on-campus resources that caught her attention. "Of course, the South Bay Promise was very eye catching for me for sure." The FYE program is a program for first-year college students that provides educational and career guidance. Priority registration is one of the advantages a student can take with the program.

"It's a great opportunity to get your first few years free," Hazell said. "That's for anybody on campus, and not just athletes."

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ENROLLMENT AND ATHLETIC ROSTER NUMBERS (2021-22 AND FALL 2022)

Student enrollment numbers are from 2021-22, while roster numbers are from Fall 2022 or Spring 2022. The following sports for each school were the most popular. Information was taken from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Data Mart

El Camino

Student enrollment: 28,604

- Football: 97
- Baseball: 37
- Men's soccer: 30
- Women's soccer: 25
- Track and field: 25

Pasadena

Student enrollment: 32,971

- Football: 84
- Men's soccer: 29
- Baseball: 28
- Women's soccer: 22

Riverside

Student enrollment: 27,084

- Football: 95
- Men's track and field: 65
- Baseball: 37
- Men's cross country: 25
- Men's water polo: 21

San Francisco

Student enrollment: 37,831

- Football: 84
- Men's soccer: 34
- Baseball: 26
- Women's soccer: 24
- Women's tennis: 16
- Women's swimming: 16

Bakersfield

Student enrollment: 37,560

- Football: 87
- Men's track and field: 31
- Baseball: 29
- Men's soccer: 28
- Women's soccer: 27
- Men's swimming: 14

El Camino athletics cost

Department	Supplies	Memberships/dues	Travel	Equipment
Athletic Equipment	\$28,310	\$6,550	\$6,000	\$79,140
Mens/Womens Sports	Classified salaries	Transportation	Supplies	Memberships/dues
	\$14,205	\$60,000	\$11,469	\$11,000

Source: El Camino College Community District