

UVic sports teams struggle for funding

Many student athletes forced to fundraise and pay hundreds of dollars to represent university at competitions

by David Karp

Ian Cruickshank has a large bruise on his arm, which he admits still hurts. The Vikes field hockey goalie received it when he stopped a shot days before.

"It's the only part on my body where I don't have padding," said Cruickshank, whose bruise lies between the area protected by his glove and his lacrosse elbow pad.

Cruickshank uses a mix of lacrosse and ice hockey gear and hand-me-downs from teammate Jonathan Plumbley.

A top-of-the-line field hockey elbow pad would have covered the area where Cruickshank was bruised, but it's not something the team's \$16,119 annual budget can afford.

Proper goalie gear is not something Cruickshank can afford either.

"I'd have to sell myself and my soul," he said. According to Cruickshank, most of the team's budget is spent on travel. Players pay roughly \$200 in fees, which buys them a track suit, among other things. They must buy their own sticks. Cruickshank just forked over \$330 for new kickers, protective shoes for his feet.

Things aren't much better on the women's field hockey team, which has more than \$110,000 to work with.

However, that budget includes the salary of women's coach Lynne Beecroft, who works full time. Men's field hockey coach Alan Williams is paid an honorarium for his part-time coaching.

And while the men have lower travel costs because they only go as far as Vancouver and don't stay overnight, the women's team often has to fly and stay in hotels.

In fact, the women's budget is only enough for the first semester and doesn't cover the indoor tournaments the team plays in the spring.

According to Beecroft, her players paid \$550 this year, which includes sticks, shoes, a track suit and a weight-room pass. But that's offset by a \$750 athlete assistance grant for each player.

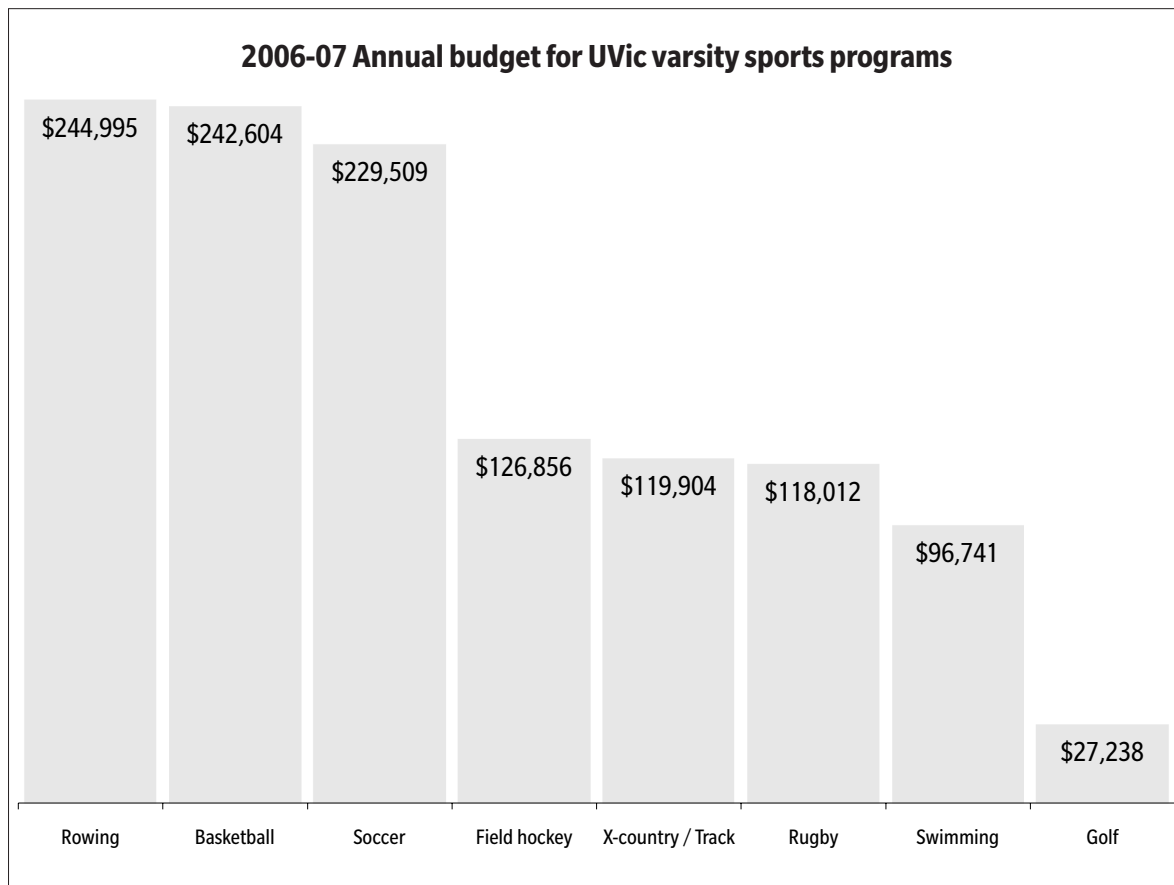
Many UVic players also compete for the national team.

"We had six kids play in the Junior World Cup, and I think it cost them \$2,500 [each] to go to Chile to play," said Beecroft.

"I've jokingly said that sticks cost \$200, shoes or turf boots cost \$75, playing for the Vikes is priceless," said Beecroft.

UVic separates their varsity teams into two classes, Level I and Level II. Level I sports get a full-time coach and "a full competitive operational budget," according to Athletics and Recreation Director Clint Hamilton.

Level II sports receive an honorarium for their coach and "what



DAVID KARP AND STEVE MASUCH GRAPHICS

resources operationally we can [provide]," said Hamilton.

"UVic has a strong philosophy that what sports we're going to be [Level I] in, we want to be a leading, nationally competitive program," he said.

Hamilton added the history of a particular sport at UVic plays an important role in determining a sport's funding level. For instance, the men's rugby program receives six times more funding than women's rugby.

"You can look at things like the history of the men's rugby program," said Hamilton. "Women's rugby is still in a lot of ways ... a fairly new sport"

The decision for what teams get Level I or II funding "is made by the president with the advice of the President's Advisory Committee on Athletics and Recreation," states UVic Policy 1735. University President David Turpin would not comment on the policy.

The committee that's supposed to advise the president doesn't exist right now.

"The advisory committee was never that functional and I don't have great plans for its revival," wrote David Clode, UVic's executive director of student and ancillary services, in an e-mail.

In 1998, the university demoted volleyball from Level I to Level II because of funding cuts, while introducing women's rugby and men's field hockey as Level II sports. Volleyball was dropped entirely in 2003.

Right now, rowing gets more funding than any other UVic sport. The men's and women's programs were allocated a combined \$244,995 in funding this year. That

LEVEL I SPORTS

- Basketball
- Cross-country/Track
- Rowing
- Soccer
- Swimming
- Women's field hockey
- Men's rugby

LEVEL II SPORTS

- Golf
- Men's field hockey
- Women's rugby

doesn't include the thousands of dollars the teams fundraise each year from hosting races.

"To row, you need a boat. An eight-person boat, a shell, is right around \$40,000," explained Hamilton. "To play basketball, you've got shoes, you've got basketballs and you've got jerseys. It doesn't surprise me that rowing's our most expensive sport."

Although the budget sends the team to the Brown Cup and the Canadian University Rowing Championships, UVic's roughly 75 rowers still need to pitch in for certain races.

"When we go to Boston, that's a very expensive trip, and there's an assessment made against each athlete who goes," said women's rowing coach Rick Crawley. He estimates rowers who make the annual trip pay a third of their costs.

"They're certainly not living high off the hog, I'll tell you that," said Crawley. "It's usually four to a room."

Then there are sports clubs such as the UVic men's ice hockey team.

The squad competes in the B.C. Intercollegiate Hockey League. According to club president Rishi Mahal, the team received \$1,600 this year from the university, despite having expenses of over \$10,000 for the season.

On top of league fees, the team plays in the Lower Mainland and needs to pay for travel and hotels. That means UVic ice hockey players paid roughly \$500 each to compete this year—not including equipment and sticks that can cost hundreds of dollars.

And the team's travel costs will skyrocket next season, when teams from Prince George, Kelowna and Kamloops will join the league.

Mahal said he thinks the lack of funding for hockey is unfair.

"We're trying to run a legitimate team ... and these guys are paying quite a bit of money to represent the school," said Mahal. "It would be nice if we could have uniforms or jerseys that are UVic colours, but we can't afford to get those."

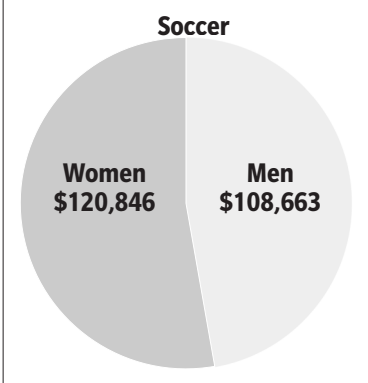
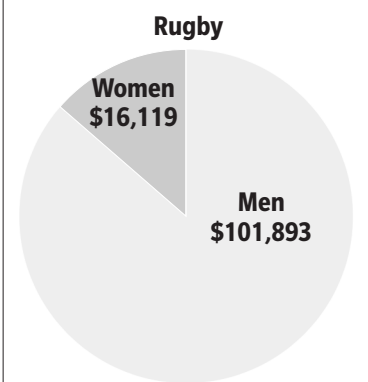
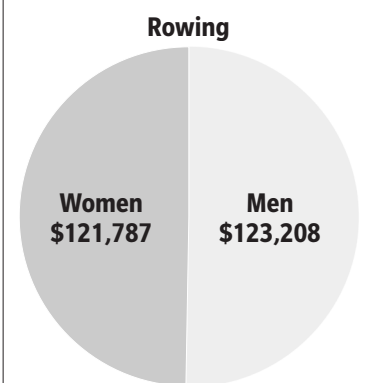
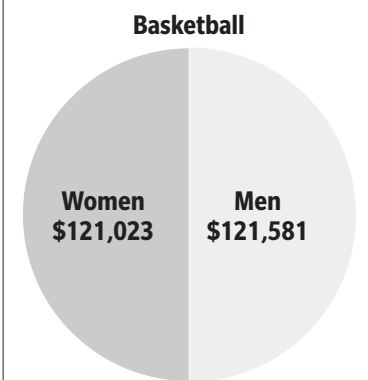
"[Our budget] just pays for our hotel on one trip. That's it."

On the bright side, UVic's men's and women's basketball teams have most of their costs covered. Each team has their season and playoff travel and two exhibition tournaments covered.

The biggest piece of equipment players need is shoes, which they get for free through an agreement with New Balance. Track suits are covered through fundraising, and the team even had an exhibition road trip to Arizona financed by a private company.

But even in that scenario, athletes also face the costs of being students: tuition, books and room and board.

Funding by gender for UVic varsity sports, 2006-07



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