



# Feasibility Study

## Women's Collegiate Triathlon



Triathlon is a sport for life that has a perfect nexus with higher education. It teaches extraordinary discipline and endurance, while requiring the utmost balance of the mind and body. Student-athletes compete in three distinctly separate athletic activities – 750m swim, 20km bike, 5k run – and combine them into one race that lasts approximately 75 minutes.

Draft-legal racing offers a unique opportunity for strategic teamwork, teaching student-athletes to persevere as individuals while cooperating and competing as a high-performing team. As a result, student-athletes acquire skills and attributes that distinguish them in front of potential employers and on graduate school applications. Triathlon naturally attracts disciplined and high-achieving student-athletes who are prepared to become extraordinary leaders on campus and in life.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **Part I: The Basics of the Sport – General Information**

- A. Competition Season – Competition structure & availability of fall and spring competition
- B. Squad Size & Grant-in-Aid – Squad minimum, ideal squad size & scholarship limitations
- C. Coaching Staff – Coaching limitations and availability of quality coaching
- D. Facilities for Competition and Training – Student-athletes training needs
- E. Student-Athlete Experience – Nature of the student-athlete experience
- F. Recruiting Landscape – Availability of quality prospective student-athletes
- G. Available Funding – USAT grant information and other potential funding opportunities
- H. Women’s Collegiate Triathlon Racing Format

### **PART II: Elements for Adding Women’s Triathlon at the Institution Name**

- A. Justification
- B. Goals
- C. Recruitment
- D. Facility Needs and Usage
- E. Competitive Events and Opportunities
- F. Proposed Budget

### **PART III: Implementation Plan – Timeline for Adding the Sport**

## Part I: The Basics of the Sport – information about NCAA Women’s Triathlon

### A. Competition Season

- Competitive season starts on September 1st and ends October 31st.
- Women’s Collegiate National Championships takes place the first, second or third weekend in November.
- Two National Championship Qualifiers are available – East and West – to qualify teams and individual student-athletes for the Women’s Collegiate National Championships.
  - Athletes qualify for the 2023 Women’s Collegiate Triathlon National Championships by one of the following three automatic qualification processes, in priority order:
    - The top eight (8) NCAA Varsity teams in DI, DII, and DIII, based on finish place, will earn an automatic National Championships team qualification for a maximum of seven (7) athletes.
    - Individual Qualifiers will fill the remaining 20 spots based on Individual end of season rankings. All athletes from “Qualified Teams” will be removed from the Individual Rankings.
- Minimum number of dates of competition is four (4) and the maximum is six (6) across the fall (championship season) and the spring (non-championship season). National Qualifiers and Women’s Collegiate National Championships may count as dates of competition.
- Events of any team size meet the definition of a competition, including duals, triangulars, quads, outdoor triathlons, indoor triathlons and swim-run events. The only additional need is three student-athletes per institution finish the event.

### B. Squad Size & Grant-in-Aid

- Roster size may vary – 12 to 15 is the ideal squad size with the current race format. However, additional race formats are under consideration by the Collegiate Triathlon Coaches Association that may create more competitive opportunities and thus the potential for larger squad sizes. Conversations around this are slated to be consummated for 2023.
- Minimum squad size for team competitions is three (3) athletes and maximum squad size for team competition is seven (7). To score as a team, five athletes (5) are required to have a finishing time.
- The NCAA Division I grant-in-aid equivalency is 6.5. It is 5.0 for Division II.

### C. Coaching Staff

- The NCAA permissible coaching limitation is:
  - One (1) head coach and one (1) assistant (full or part-time)
  - Three (3) volunteer assistant coaches, one per discipline (swimming, biking, running)
- Qualified triathlon coaches are available – through USA Triathlon’s Coaching Certification program that are more than 2,500 coaches – with another 1000+ qualified international coaches.
- Salaries are commensurate with pay to other similarly positioned sports within the respective athletic department (often Tennis, Bowling and Cross Country).

### D. Facilities for Competition and Training

- A variety of pools and open water swimming venues can be used for training. Utilizing available on-campus and community aquatics facilities combined with local/regional open water can benefit student-athlete preparation for the 750-meter swim. Regular access to open water is not required for intercollegiate competitive training but can serve as training opportunities for navigating buoys, nuances of water temperatures and tides and practicing team tactics in the water. Competitive NCAA triathlon teams typically train four days per week in the water.
- Training on the bicycle includes outdoor workouts on local streets and roads. Using paved biking trails are also an option for those in certain locations. Indoor training sessions can also be used for targeted workouts and during inclement weather.
- Training for the run portion of the sport mirrors cross country training and takes place on local streets or roads, cross country courses, city parks or running paths and available track surfaces. Indoor training is also an option in colder climates.

### E. Student-Athlete Experience

- The multidisciplinary nature of the sport, essentially cross training in swimming, biking and running, promotes healthy development of the body and lower rates of injury. All three disciplines are activities that can help keep a woman healthy over a lifetime.
- Triathlon training and placement of the season provides a natural fit with the competitive swimming and track seasons for those student-athletes who are qualified

and desire to compete in multiple sports.

- In extraordinary situations, student-athletes have been known to compete in both crosscountry and triathlon that overlap seasons in the fall.

## F. Recruiting Landscape

- The United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee in October of 2018, 2019 and 2021 recognized triathlon with an award for the greatest increase in women and minority engagement in sport across all of the 46 national governing bodies. Increases were demonstrated in participation, staffing, and committee membership. To further perpetuate the need to grow women's participation opportunities in triathlon, USAT hired a regional facilitator focused on building women's programming and participation at the youth, high school and collegiate levels.
- Prospective student-athletes can be found throughout the United States and abroad. USA Triathlon supports extraordinary youth training opportunities through its high-performance teams, collegiate clubs, high school clubs and competitions, non-draft racing, indoor triathlons and single sport competitions.
- During 2019 alone (pre-covid), over 5,000 female triathletes between the ages of 14 and 19 competed in USA Triathlon sanctioned events.
- There are more than forty (40) high performance teams that train prospective student-athletes for draft-legal competitions. Each team varies in size but normally carries 30-35 student-athletes on their full-time rosters.
- Currently, 110 USA Triathlon certified collegiate club teams participate in Collegiate Club Triathlon season (August to May).
- In 2019, there were 150 high school club programs across the country. The pandemic hit this program hard but we are building again and should be at near record numbers by year's end. We are also supporting high school waves at each of our 50 high school state championships.
- Over 80% of high schools in the U.S. support either a high school cross country team, track and field squad or swim program. Track and Field is one of the highest participation sports at the high school level and the sport through which most triathletes enter the sport. Over 1 million athletes compete in these sports that are considered recruitable by coaches in NCAA programs.
- Another 130 countries around the world have triathlon programs for high school aged athletes who are potential recruits. Europe and Oceania are competitive regions for the sport and are where most of the international athletes reside who ultimately compete in the U.S. Over 25 countries populate NCAA programs currently.

- USA Triathlon is working closely with high school athlete recruitment portals (like NCSA) to add the sport of triathlon so that athletes around the globe can be more easily identified. Many current teams have small contingents of international triathletes.
- USAT has built recruitment and talent ID combines for recruitment whereby athletes submit times for a 1600 meter run and 100-meter swim and enter into a USAT supported portal (called Gametime).

## G. Available Funding

- Access is available to limited grant funds through the USA Triathlon Women's Triathlon Emerging Sports Grant. USA Triathlon was first allocated \$2.6 million which helped the first 27 programs that added triathlon. In 2018, another \$895,000 of funds were approved for payment to programs as an aid in start-up. In total, USA Triathlon will provide roughly \$3.5 million in funding support. This grant provides funding to NCAA Division I, II and III institutions to develop, implement, grow and sustain a Women's Triathlon program. All recipients must be full NCAA member institutions. Programs must stay in existence for seven years otherwise the entire grant must be repaid. USA Triathlon has a grant writer available to assist throughout the grant application process. The application and additional information can be found on the USA Triathlon page under the [grant information](#) section.

## F. Women's Collegiate Triathlon Racing Format

- Student-athletes compete in a sprint distance race: swim – 750m, bike – 20km, and run – 5km and will race for approximately 90 minutes or less.
- Official NCAA collegiate competition is “draft-legal.” This means that student-athletes may work together while cycling to gain speed and advantage over their top runners for success. Pacing is also done in the swim and run and are both legal if done by athletes in the event.

## PART II: Elements for Adding Women's Triathlon at Furman (copy that you can present to your President)

Furman University seeks to be a leader in the triathlon space once the sport is operational on campus. The plan is to have a women's triathlon team debut in 2023-2024 academic season with a goal of participating in a minimum two (2) draft-legal events plus the national qualifier and the national championship during the first season (total of four races). Recruiting will take place during the 2023-2024 season from junior elite triathlon clubs, high-performance teams and high schools, as well as from the local and regional levels in high school cross country, swimming and track and field. Furman expects to host a squad size of fifteen (15) at full implementation of the program by 2024-2025 (year two).

## A. Justification

- Triathlon will complement the institution by attracting disciplined and high academic achieving prospective student-athletes consistent with the core values of Furman University.
- Adding Women's Triathlon will help meet the institution's commitment to gender equity and/or Title IX requirements.
- Triathlon is a multi-discipline sport that empowers women to develop leadership qualities through a sport that promotes lifetime fitness.
- Greenville is a community with an affinity for outdoor activities and success in the sistersports of swimming, cycling and running.
- Greenville is the ideal training location for triathlon. The weather, terrain, open water, trails and more, provide significant advantages and are ideal for elite level training.
- Greenville is a hot bed for triathletes and would recruit w/o incurring many costs of travel; the institution could very well be competing for national titles in the first year of recruitment.

## B. Goals for Adding Women's Triathlon

- **To increase athletic participation opportunities for women.** Under the current competition format, a squad size of 14 (two squads of seven since this is the number that compete in each event) is ideal and the first full squad could be recruited over a three-year period.
- **To enhance the athletics department Olympic profile.** Furman University has a robust history of fielding top endurance based athletes (cross country/track). Elite level training supported by the institution will provide a significant opportunity to prepare women to compete for national titles, national team membership, and potential Olympic qualification, for both the US and other nations.
- **To add a sport that is growing for girls and women.** As an early adopter at the Division I level, Furman will gain an advantage with greater access to prospective student-athletes, coaches, resource support, national corporate partnerships and related USA Triathlon Foundation Grants. When Triathlon becomes an NCAA championship sport (soon), Furman will be uniquely positioned to earn Director's Cup points.
- **To enhance the academic profile of student-athletes.** Varsity triathlon teams have on average more than half of their members qualifying for the Conference All-Academic Teams.

- **To add a sport that is supported by and growing in the state of South Carolina.** There are currently 5000 females, ages 19 and under, who are registered as USA Triathlon members.

### C. Recruitment

Furman University will have immediate access to the most elite junior triathletes across the country and around the world. USAT has created 15 different touch points on how institutions can recruit and will offer assistance with many of them when asked. There are also some onboarding details that are shared with coaches that, through video, touch on other ways athletes can be recruited in the sport. With over 26 current countries that populate existing NCAA programs, the time is right for international recruitment to also bear fruit for the institution. Additionally, with 50 state championships slated for 2023, and more than 5,000 registered USA Triathlon female members between the ages of 15 and 19, who are competing on a consistent bases in events throughout the summer months, identifying talent is not difficult. Add to this number the single sport athletes and you will find nearly a million other athletes who are recruitable by the institutions. Over 30% of the current athletes on teams come from single sport backgrounds.

### D. Facility Needs and Uses

Training for women's triathlon student-athletes will take place in existing campus facilities as seen in the chart below:

Facility Need	Facility Location
Swimming	Your Sports Center Pool – (approximately 4 x week)
	Open Water (occasionally)
Biking	Excellent biking immediately proximate to campus and surrounding area (see more information below)
Running	Running needs would mirror cross country teams sessions and locations
Coaches Offices	Drop Location Plan Here
Locker/Storage Room	Drop Location Plan Here



Greenville is a fantastic city for cycling, running and outdoor competitions, with adequate roads, paths and trails for riding.

## E. Competitive Events and Opportunities

Women's Collegiate Triathlon competes in at least four and not more than six events per season. There are more than 4,300 USA Triathlon sanctioned events in the United States each year. The USA Triathlon staff can work with area race directors near Greenville to create a NCAA qualified collegiate wave, if needed.

As of 2023-2024 there are two (2) national qualifying events located respectively in the east and west regions of the country. The dates and locations are made available in late March of each preceding year.

Sample Schedule:

Date	Event	Location
9/4	Fall race	Area event
9/16	Fall race	Area event
10/15	West Regional Qualifier	Springfield, MO (2023)
11/12	National Championships	Tempe, AZ (2023)
3/6	Spring race	Florida

## F. Proposed Budget – Expense and Revenue Projects

The budget will be comprised of the following key areas (USAT has sample divisional budgets that are aggregated from existing programs – just request from Tim Yount):

- Swim, bike and run apparel for training, racing and general wear
- Equipment purchases
- Travel/transportation for competitions

- Coaching salaries/benefits
- Scholarship costs
- Recruitment
- Facility or equipment rental, if needed
- Internal expenses (i.e., medical, conditioning, academic, IT, telecommunications)
- Continuing education
- Athlete registration costs
- Mechanic support

Revenue:

- Grant funding
- NCAA funding
- Fundraising (not positioned in the sample budget but should be noted)
- Gift in Kind (not positioned in the sample budget but would happen with the hiring of the right coach)

Some of these expenses can be secured at discount. In other cases, value in kind procurement is a viable option. USA Triathlon can assist making contact with vendors that may supply product and equipment and can serve as consultant to coach(es) as needed. USA Triathlon has also committed to supporting needs through national level companies as cost offsets for institutions.

Program support areas will be impacted by the addition of a new sport. Financial impact on the following areas should be considered in preparing a program cost estimate: program administration, athletic training/sports medicine, strength & conditioning, academic support, and athletic communications.

### **Part III: Implementation Plan**

The Women's Triathlon program will officially start in the 2023-2024 season with the goal of competing in a minimum of four events plus 1 national qualifier and 1 national championship. A coach will be hired during the 2023-2024 academic year to allow for recruiting to take place.

The program will start with 10-12 student-athletes (short turn) in the first year of competition and will look to grow to 15 student-athletes by 2024-2025.

Year 1:

- 10-12 total athletes
- 1 Head Coach, 1 volunteer assistant
- 2 events, plus one National Qualifier, and National Championships (Total of 4)

Year 2:

- 13-15 total athletes
- 1 Head Coach, 1 part-time assistant, 1 volunteer coach
- 4 events, plus one National Qualifier, and National Championships (Total of 6)

Year 3:

- 15+ total athletes
- 1 Head Coach, 1 full-time assistant, two volunteer assistants
- 4 events, plus one National Qualifier, and National Championships (Total of 6)