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Cyclones athletes council helps promote camaraderie

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Mills athletes help implement new NCAA rules.
(Monika Sabic)

During the fall sport season, Cyclones are waking up early to sharpen their skills and share laughs with their teammates at practice, but one group of student athletes is putting in extra time outside of the game to solidify the athletic department.

The Student Athletic Advisory Council (SAAC) provides students a sense of community within the Athletics, Physical Education and Recreation Department, by encouraging support for the six teams and Cyclone pride. Mills athletes are able to voice their concerns to the council that will help benefit them as a student athletes.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) requires each school to institute an advisory council for athletes. SAAC acts as a liaison between the athletic department and the six teams to promote and host athletic workshops as well as discuss changes to the NCAA rules.

The current SAAC at Mills includes fifteen athletic representatives, roughly two to three volunteer student representatives from each team.

Allie Fox, Athletic Compliance director, thinks that SAAC offers a chance for students to be actively involved on campus.

"I think [SAAC] is fantastic," Fox said. "It's a great opportunity for the student athletes to be leaders at their school and their teams. And they really do have a voice, and not just on the rules."

Cassandra Colten, sophomore crew member and APER senator, believes SAAC helped her become a leader for both the athletic department as well as her team.

"[On crew] we work hand in hand with the seniors to present topics during our afternoon practices and trying to make sure everyone on the team is healthy," Colten said. "And if they are not, that they know that they can come to us if they don't feel comfortable going to the coaches."

Through SAAC, athletic teams are paired to solidify the fan base and relationship with one another. Partner teams attend each other's games as well as create different activities for each other, such as a movie night. This year, the swim and soccer teams will be switching their practices so that they can experience the other's conditioning and practice drills.

“It’s really nice because you feel connected with other athletes and you support each other,” said Colten. “You get people going to your events which is nice because we don’t always have the best participation to go to games or events, so you know that you can count on your partner team to support you. ”

SAAC is also working to get Mills students more involved and spirited throughout the department.

Swim Coach and SAAC Advisor, Neil Virtue, believes that SAAC is more than just a council that organizes athletic activities, but a safe place for athletes to discuss issues.

“It provides a distinct avenue venue where people can talk about hot topics that are happening,” said Virtue. “And sometimes we will use this space to talk about things on campus and how it is affecting our group. It just kind of is another network that can be meaningful and powerful in forming connections as a sense of belonging.”

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