

Will Kirkwood add more sports some day?

Written by Jim Ecker
Thursday, 26 December 2013 20:45 -

Doug Wagemester keeps a file in his office at Kirkwood Community College. Every time someone asks him about adding another sport, the Kirkwood athletic director makes a note and adds the inquiry to his file.

"I've got a file on bowling, I've got a file on roller derby, a file on soccer," Wagemester said. "I've got a file on football, I've got a file on track, I've got a file on wrestling, I've got a file on cross country."

Kirkwood President Mick Starceвич and the Board of Trustees would make the ultimate decision about expanding the athletic department, but Wagemester does not rule it out.

"I don't think it's out of the question. I really don't," he said.

"It's good conversation. My guess is, that day will probably come and we'll look at expanding it, but I don't know when."

Kirkwood has one of the largest enrollments among the 14 community colleges in Iowa that have an athletic department, yet the Eagles rank near the bottom with only six teams.

Iowa Central has 19 teams for its men's and women's programs. Iowa Western has 14, NIACC 13 and Iowa Lakes 12. Indian Hills, Ellsworth and Southwestern all have nine teams and DMACC has eight.

Kirkwood, Marshalltown and Scott come next with six teams apiece. Only three schools - Southeastern, Clinton and Muscatine - have less.

Kirkwood has quality programs across the board with women's basketball, men's basketball, softball, baseball, volleyball and men's golf. They are routinely ranked among the best in the

Will Kirkwood add more sports some day?

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 26 December 2013 20:45 -

country and the women's basketball program, for instance, has won six national titles.

If Kirkwoods adds a sport, Wagemester said the school would want to make sure it's done right. "Sometimes more is not necessarily better," he said, citing quantity vs. quality. "What would it take to get it off the ground?"

Wagemester said Kirkwood is always looking for ways to improve. That includes athletics.

"How do we do things better? Where can we be better? Where can we meet community needs?" he remarked. "Those type of things."

Money plays a big role, of course. More teams would require more money for coaches, travel, recruiting, officials, equipment, uniforms. All of Kirkwood's coaches are full-time employees of the school with additional duties on campus, as opposed to some schools that might have a part-time coach with a part-time salary.

Wagemester believes the overall program benefits from having coaches who are full-time employees. If Kirkwood expands the athletic department, he'd want to make sure the school continues to operate at a high level.

"That's where my concern would be," he said. "If we're going to do it, let's do it the right way. Which is Kirkwood's way, in my opinion."

Wagemester said Kirkwood has experienced a slight decline in enrollment, which could affect how things are done in the future. "Enrollment drives dollars, dollars drive the college," he noted. "Things of that sort."

Wagemester said some sports would be easier - and less expensive - to add than others. Cross country, bowling, women's golf, tennis and soccer might be relatively inexpensive. On the other hand, football would be extremely expensive, even if Kirkwood could have access to the football

Will Kirkwood add more sports some day?

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 26 December 2013 20:45 -

field at nearby Cedar Rapids Prairie.

Wagemester acknowledged there are quality high school programs in the Metro area in most sports, so finding athletes to field a competitive team might not be a major obstacle, although Kirkwood might have to expand its recruiting base beyond its backyard to compete at the national level.

Wagemester stepped aside as the men's basketball coach at Kirkwood after last season and is now the full-time athletic director, although he could return to coaching in the future. He said being the full-time A.D. would make it easier for Kirkwood to add sports, since he now would have more time to devote to the project.

Wagemester said Kirkwood officials also have discussed the possibility of switching from the Division II level to Division I in the National Junior College Athletic Association, but it's a complicated issue that involves schedules, budgets, housing, recruiting and other matters. The Eagles have been highly successful - and comfortable - at the Division II level.

"If it's not broke, don't fix it," he remarked.

Wagemester acknowledged that the men's and women's basketball teams might draw bigger crowds if they competed at the Division I level, but said there are no guarantees. "I think the potential would be there to increase attendance, but I don't think it's a given," he remarked.

Kirkwood typically draws several hundred fans to its basketball games, roughly comparable to most local high school games. It's a busy market with Kirkwood, Coe, Mount Mercy, Cornell and the high schools all operating in the giant shadow cast by the Iowa Hawkeyes.

Wagemester said there are numerous factors to consider about the possibility of adding sports or jumping to Division I.

Will Kirkwood add more sports some day?

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 26 December 2013 20:45 -

"It's not quite as simple as people might think," he said. "There are a lot of different things to think about."