



UConn Rec Ends Funding for Club Sports, Cuts Ties with Multiple Teams

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Ties between University of Connecticut Recreation and numerous UConn club sports teams have been severed following initial budget constraints and recent demotions from club sport status.

These structural changes to the sector of club sports came early in the spring semester, forcing student teams to rely solely on financial support from the Undergraduate Student Government and club fundraising in the upcoming budget year.

In a statement to The Daily Campus included in the university's response to a Freedom of Information Act request, UConn said it was working to address its funding shortfalls.

"[The university] has been working to address fiscal constraints throughout this budget year as it faces state funding shortfalls and other revenue reductions," the statement read. "This has required cost-containment plans throughout the institution, including the Division of Student Life & Enrollment and UConn Recreation."

The funding for each club team will continue through the end of the spring semester and the change will go into effect during the fall 2026 semester beginning July 1.

USG held a town hall on Feb. 17 to hear directly from the teams impacted by the funding change. Teams in attendance included women's rugby, men's lacrosse, water polo, hockey, tap, women's ultimate, men's soccer, field hockey, cycling, men's and women's skiing and women's lacrosse.

During the town hall, teams spoke on their struggles for financial support travel. They also touched on communication difficulties with the UConn Recreation Center and the lack of notice on club sport team cuts.

"I've met with the dean of students and I met with Vice President of Student Life and Enrollment Nathan Fuerst to discuss next steps, because this is impacting a large population of students and I am worried about the sustainability of these programs," USG Comptroller Billy Lipinski said. "I do believe that the Rec Center wants what's best for these groups, but right now, it's not what's best for these groups."

The Rec Center's resources will remain available for club sports teams throughout the transitional period.

"UConn Recreation will continue to support the operations of club sports teams, including with resources such as access to Rec spaces, support for their fundraising efforts, and helping them identify other potential funding sources," the university's FOIA statement read.

The FY26 and FY27 SLE

Department Budget Reduction Recommendations show a \$400,000 proposed expense reduction for fiscal year 2027, a \$100,000 decrease from the current budget. The budget shows an allocation of \$123,000 for Club Sports funding in FY27.

Prior to the funding changes, UConn Recreation recognized and supported 36 club sports teams, as stated on their website. The UConn Ski Team was among one of many club teams to be demoted.

"We received an email from the Rec basically saying that because we didn't meet certain requirements that they had, we would no longer be considered a club sport," sixth-semester ski team Secretary Nathan Zimbleman said.

Zimbleman said the ski team does not practice at the Rec Center — they go north to the slopes in Vermont and New Hampshire to practice.

"All club teams lost their funding, but only teams that do not use UConn-managed facilities — including the ski team — were also removed from Club Sports and transitioned to Registered Student Organizations," club ski member Trevor Buckeridge said in a written statement to The Daily Campus. "In their communication, Recreation stated that for teams operating outside their facilities, 'there is no longer a clear operational purpose for remaining within the Club Sports program.'"

The team relied on the financial and administrative support provided by UConn Recreation as a registered club sport.

"This decision has immediate financial consequences for our athletes," Buckeridge said. "Team dues are already \$900, and for those who travel and compete at higher levels, including nationals, total out-of-pocket costs can exceed \$1,500 per year. For context, this is already comparable to or lower than other club sports — such as club lacrosse, where dues can reach around \$2,000 annually."

Buckeridge voiced concern with the tightening of the team's budget and how fundraising efforts and coordinating with the USCSA, the governing body of collegiate ski racing, will be handled moving forward.

Teams removed from club sport status were informed via email of the change in status by UConn Recreation, describing it as an "opportunity" for teams, Buckeridge said.

The email said "that the transition 'provides an opportunity for teams to continue their activities outside of Club Sports,'" Buckeridge said. "In reality, what is being labeled as an opportunity is the removal of funding, structure, and institutional support that teams have relied on for years. That language feels not only misleading but dismissive of the very real impact on student-athletes."



UConn Alpine Club celebrates qualification for the 2026 USCSA National Championships at Whiteface Mountain following a strong regional performance. The team, competing as a club sport, faces increased financial burden due to reduced university funding, requiring athletes to cover travel and competition expenses independently. PHOTO BY COURTESY OF @UCONNSTEAM ON INSTAGRAM.

The ski team consists of 22 members who compete in Division I competitions, most recently winning the women's national championship in the Slalom event last year.

"I think having this decision made for us was surprising," Zimbleman said. "I don't know that it's necessarily a bad thing, because it is probably the decision we would have made eventually, but they didn't really give us a warning in saying, 'hey, you're not a club sport anymore.' It just kind of happened out of the blue, again, without a whole lot of communication."

Even with the loss of financial support from UConn Recreation, the team expressed their appreciation of the support from student leaders in USG.

"It's also important to note that this decision came from UConn Recreation, not from the student body," Buckeridge said. "[USG], which is student-run, continues to fund our team and remains our primary source of university support. In that sense, student backing for teams like ours is still strong, even as administrative support is being reduced."

Even with the changes to the team's official status and new budgetary limits, the ski team plans to return to the slopes.

"We are confident in our ability to continue forward, but this decision significantly increases both the financial and operational burden on student-athletes," Buckeridge said. "More than anything, it leaves us questioning how teams like ours fit into the university's priorities moving forward."

Another club sport that faced a demotion from club sport status was the UConn Woodsmen, a team of about 25 to 30 individuals. The sport competes in a series of timber sports, like chopping wood, sawing and

chainsaw events. These events are speed-based and replicate what lumberjacks do in the lumber and timer industry.

The woodsmen compete in roughly eight competitions throughout the entire academic year: three in the fall semester and four or five times in the spring, according to Chase Haitsch, the club's secretary. These competitions have brought the team to colleges in New York and Maine.

Their travel expenses are covered by the funding they receive from USG and through fundraising efforts they host during the academic year.

"I don't exactly remember what it is, but [UConn Recreation] gives us a flat thing of \$1,000 or \$1,500, or something like that," Haitsch said. "We usually use that for some of our extra stuff, like... our home meet competition every spring semester, usually at the beginning. It takes a lot to fund that event."

Haitsch continued to state that UConn Recreation has helped the club by providing paramedics during the competitions, which has allowed funding from USG to go directly to travel costs.

Unlike other club sports, the team doesn't utilize the UConn Recreation Center spaces to practice. Practices for the woodsmen are held at the Ratcliffe Hicks Arena, located on the east side of the Storrs campus.

The team maintained open communication with the Rec Center when it came to organizing campus competitions and general meetings and did not have any issues. The only surprising moment occurred after their removal as a club sport.

"After we got kicked off the club sports program, it was kind of like a shock because we

had previously discussed in our meetings that the actual funding was going to go away from the Rec just because of the budget constraints," Haitsch said. The team was going to lose their Rec money before they lost their status as a club sport.

Prior to hearing about the changes in their tiered club status, the Rec has asked the team if they still wanted to remain a club sport.

"We believed that it was going to be our choice. But one day, we woke up and we just got an

"This decision has immediate financial consequences for our athletes."

TREVOR BUCKERIDGE

email with a couple of other club sports telling us that it wasn't our decision and that we were no longer a club sport," Haitsch said.

The woodsmen were among the many cut club sports that were surprised by the demotion, as they were under the impression the decision would involve their input or would be on their terms.

"We actually were going to have a meeting at one of our board meetings, to decide whether it was worth it to stay as a club sport or not," Haitsch said. "I believe we all wanted to stay as a club sport, but the decision was taken out of our hands."

Navigating this change in organizational structure is now up to the team to figure out through their offseason in preparation for fall recruitment.

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