

Intercollegiate soccer coming to LTCC

By Kathryn Reed

Leon Abravanel wonders where the two best players on his high school team might be today if they would have had the opportunity to play soccer after graduation.

“The repercussions of something like this are huge – not just for (kids) right out of high school, but for the whole community,” Abravanel told the Lake Tahoe Community College board of education Tuesday night.

The *something* was the unanimous approval of women and men’s intercollegiate soccer programs. The first games should be played in fall 2014.



While the LTCC college board on June 25 was voting to approve an intercollegiate soccer program, an adult league used what will be the home field for the college team. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Abravanel came up from Southern California to tell his story to the board on June 25. He’s a native of South Lake Tahoe,

having graduated from South Tahoe High School in 2004. He was part of the soccer team in 2003 that won the first state championship for the Vikings. That was the year they were ranked 19th in the nation. He played Division I collegiate soccer and was a professional player for four years. Now he coaches fulltime.

“There’s not a lot of opportunity here, especially for the Hispanic community,” Abravanel said of soccer. “Many had no opportunity to go farther than high school.”

His two teammates he wonders about; they are in jail.

Tuesday’s staff report says, “A recent (California Community College Athletics Association) study on student-athlete academic performance, moreover, showed that athletes transferred at higher rates to four-year postsecondary institutions, achieved higher GPAs and were about twice as likely to earn a degree or certificate than their non-athletic counterparts. This same study indicated that athletes graduate at higher percentages than the general population – 77 percent to 61 percent – and earn higher salaries than their non-athlete peers once in adult life.”

One of the goals with the creation of what will be LTCC’s only intercollegiate sports programs is to attract more Hispanics to the college. It is also in line with the quest to be a destination college.

To play, the athletes must take a full load of classes.

Next up is for the college to make a formal request to the Big 8 Conference, which has eight women’s teams and five men’s. Colleges in the conference include American River, Consumnes River, Diablo Valley, Modesto, Santa Rosa, Sierra, Sacramento City and San Joaquin Delta.

When LTCC had a soccer program years ago it was part of the Golden Valley Conference, which has schools farther north.

By October, LTCC expects to hire Tim Johnson as athletic director and finalize who will be the coaches. Johnson, who is a physical education teacher at LTCC, has been the main force behind the soccer proposal.

It's expected each team would have about 20 players and play 18 to 20 games in the fall. LTCC would use the field next to the college.

The start-up costs are estimated at just more than \$10,000 for the program. The entire program is expected to cost about \$100,000 each year. However, net revenue of about \$40,000 is anticipated based on projected increase in enrollment.