

Benedictine University at Mesa athletic program begins this fall

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The Benedictine University at Mesa Redhawks men's volleyball team will be one of ten intercollegiate athletic programs offered by the school during the 2015-16 season. (Courtesy of Benedictine University at Mesa)

MESA – After having been accepted into the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics last spring, Benedictine University at Mesa is launching its athletic program this fall.

While students were able to participate in club sports in previous years, being accepted into an athletic association allows the university to formally compete against other institutions.

Steve Schafer, director of athletics for the university's Mesa campus, said that it had been the intention to begin an intercollegiate athletic program since it opened in 2013.

“That was our intent, to start club sports to get teams off the ground,” he said.

Redhawks Athletics

(602) 888-5500

Sports planned for the 2015-16 academic year include men's basketball, women's softball and men's and women's volleyball, golf, tennis and cross country. Schafer said there are currently 128 student athletes enrolled for the fall semester.

Anthony Varela, a sophomore from Tempe, will be playing basketball for the Redhawks this year.

"It's a cool experience," he said. "Not too often do you get to be on the first team to ever play for the school."

Sarah Serrano, a sophomore from Gilbert who played last year on the club volleyball team, expressed her excitement about being able to compete.

"I was extremely excited about it. Playing club season here is fun, but to be in the actual collegiate competition is absolutely amazing – it's a dream come true," she said.

Serrano, who went to Seton High School, chose to attend Benedictine to continue her Catholic education with the hope to be able to also continue her athletic track.

"It's something I'm so excited to see at a Catholic university, especially in Mesa," she said.

Maintaining that Catholic identity among student athletes is an important component of the program, Schafer said, saying that the students pray as a team before and after games.

"Our kids know what it means to be Benedictine and they live by that every day," he said.

Currently there are no athletic facilities on the campus, and student athletes use facilities owned by the city or at Mesa Community College. The Redhawks are a part of the California Pacific Conference.

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