

Campus Recreation Software: 6 Features to Look For When Making Your Selection

As a key stakeholder in the selection process for campus recreation software, it is essential that you have a software system in place that not only makes your job easier and your colleagues, but one that also better serves the students that enter your facility. With choices on everything from self-service options to biometrics to added features, choosing the right campus recreation software can seem a bit daunting. To aid in this decision-making process, here's a short list of the top 6 features to look for when making your software selection.

1. **Hosted Internet Registration and Payment Processing.**

Your institution has invested a great deal to provide quality facilities and programs to your students. Further increase student satisfaction by providing a convenient online registration process. To facilitate this initiative, consider a software provider that offers Hosted Internet Registration and Payment Processing, also known as a Software-as-a-Service model. This means that the software provider hosts and manages your data off-premise so that you don't have to invest the time and money required if doing it yourself. Hosting online registration yourself means having to invest in additional payment servers, back up servers, and setting up security and firewalls. Selecting a software provider who offers hosted technology means low upfront costs and faster implementation.

2. **Integration with Best-of-Breed Systems on Campus.**

Make use of existing software investments by choosing campus recreation software that integrates with best-of-breed systems already on campus, such as your card system, intramural software, or accounting software. Don't sacrifice your accounting software investment, for example, by selecting a new software solution that lacks compatibility. Select a solution that is compatible and allows you to have one integrated system that effectively manages all programs, revenues and facilities. Integrating with best-of-breed systems alleviates duplicate entries and records.

3. **Customizable Reports.**

A campus recreation software system will capture a lot of information about who is using your campus recreation facility, when, where and how. Make sure that this information can be exported into a report that will help your institution make informed decisions and achieve its goals.

Every campus is unique in their reporting needs, and that's why it is essential that the software package you select offers customizable reporting and data output options to meet the needs of each of your constituents. Without customized reporting options built into the software solution, the responsibility of pulling specific data relies on savvy IT departments, and this can translate to a time-consuming process for IT personnel. Look for a software solution that provides you with powerful, flexible and in-depth reporting tools with multiple filters, flexible formatting, unlimited customization, mail merge, multiple export formats, and more. You'll be able to make faster, more informed decisions and view only the information you want, when you want it.

4. **Integrated Payment Processing.**

Having a campus recreation software solution that integrates with your payment processing system means reduced errors and paperwork. For busy campus recreation centers, it's important to have one integrated system to pull accurate reports, ensure tighter security, and to avoid double-entry and reconciliation and balancing between multiple systems.

5. **PCI Compliance.**

When customers provide their credit cards at point-of-sale systems, over the Internet, on the phone, or through the mail, they want assurance that their account information is safe. Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS) were established to provide guidelines to ensure that the best information security practices are implemented and maintained. PCI DSS is a set of technical and operational mandates designed to ensure that all organizations that process, store or transmit credit card information maintain a secure environment and safeguard sensitive credit card data.

PCI compliance applies to all organizations, regardless of size or number of transactions, that accept, transmit, or store any cardholder data. Your environment as well as the 3rd party software applications you use must be PCI compliant. During your software search be sure to ask software providers if their applications are PCI compliant and when their last evaluation was completed. Failure to comply with the PCI security standards may result in heavy fines, increased processing fees, or suspension of credit card transaction processing services.

6. **Ease of Use.**

Software usability is extremely important, particularly at campuses where the skills of computer users vary greatly. Consider multilingual and American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant software to meet the existing needs of your many students. Whether it's "customer-facing" documents to print receipts, contracts, reports and registration confirmations in a variety of languages or enabling visually-impaired or ESL users to use your software system, look for a software package that offers true ease-of-use through its accessibility options for everyone.

The final important selection criteria should stand on its own: choose the technology partner you trust the most. Software providers that hire and invest in good people, develop smart technologies, offer exceptional customer service and marketing support, and understand the ins and outs of running a campus recreation department are important to your overall success. You may find that it's the people behind the software technology that can matter most in determining your software selection.