



## "THE MINDSET OF CHAMPIONS"

### Florida Atlantic University

Sector | Athletic

Country | United States

***"There is a correlation in sports with the amount of leadership that is present in your culture and your ability to win in all facets of a program. We talk about winning. Winning in academics, in the weight room, in practice – it's a championship mindset." ~ Vice President and Director of Athletics, Pat Chun outlines Florida Atlantic University's athletic department's holistic "winning" philosophy.***

# 15.4%

Increase in  
GPA

# All Teams Exceed

Academic Progress  
Rate Standard

# 22.7%

Increase in Graduation  
Success Rate

### BACKGROUND

Pat Chun came to Florida Atlantic University (FAU) five years ago, in 2012, from Ohio State University. He leads FAU's athletic department, which boasts 19 sports teams, 450 student-athletes and 150 staff members, and with him, Chun brought the belief that "if the culture is right, results will follow."

As Chun took the helm, he assessed the dynamic and culture of the department. "When I arrived here five years ago this was a failed athletic program. We had one team with a winning record. The grade point average was at 2.6. There are two important markers per the NCAA, one is your Graduation Success Rate (GSR), the other is your Academic Progress Rate (APR). Our Graduation Success Rate was at 66%, and our APR had three teams at a level 1 warning for NCAA probation... So, this was a rebuild, ground up."

Realizing that the team needed direction and vision, Chun got to work developing the culture within the department.

Chun notes, "We know the culture we aspire to have. It's always a battle to stay focused on the task of constantly adhering to that culture. We want a cohesive team that is highly communicative, that is results driven, that cares about each other, that understands our purpose and mission with student-athletes. It's about having the profound understanding that who we are, and how we behave, is going to affect our coaches and student-athletes. We want to model, mentor and monitor the behavior that we want with ourselves, our coaches, and our administration. We want a high-performing team and we want to maximize performance. So, the goal is, can we build a team where there's trust, where we build relationships, where people know we care about each other's successes, and let that manifest into the results that we know will be there if we're doing things the right way?"

The Pacific Institute® (TPI) was brought in as a resource to help with this development and to



FAU Stadium

examine and foster a positive culture. All FAU coaches participated in TPI's curriculum, led by Master Facilitator Paul Herfurth, and students also participated on a voluntary basis. Believing that "sports are won and lost" with mindset is a simple concept but requires transformational thinking - key to the TPI process.

"Having Paul and The Pacific Institute come in really gave us two things. Individually, it provided introspection. For myself, for my coaches, to take an internal look at ourselves. What are our mindsets in terms of what we're thinking... Then, how that translates to how we're communicating with our young people and how we maximize performance. A key part of our job is to maximize performance of every individual in the department, whether its head coaches, assistant coaches, staff or our student-athletes. And my job is to help create a culture and steward a culture that maximizes performance in every individual," Chun states. "You know your culture is going to define who you are as a team, and we all know the importance and mandate to build a culture centered on excellence."

The cultural focus at FAU led to some natural turnover, where several coaches decided that they were not in sync with the new FAU culture. Successful coaching is not about yelling at players - which clearly doesn't work with the new generation of student-athletes. Rather, coaches need to model positive behaviors and create an environment of mutual respect and accountability.

Chun has also incorporated culture into the hiring process, looking for team members that support the vision and values of the organization – serving the student-athletes and creating a program greater than the circumstance is right now. Chun says, "Every great organization starts with people. You have to hire great people. You have to retain great people. They are the fuel towards any opportunity to have to something extraordinary."

## RESULTS

Today, the department's Grade Point Average (GPA) has increased from a 2.6 five years ago, to a 3.0 for four consecutive semesters. In addition, all teams currently exceed the APR minimum standard, and eight teams have perfect scores. In the last three years all sports have improved in performance, with teams winning conference championships, competing for conference championships, having conference "Players of the Year," a "Female Athlete of the Year," and multiple "Coaches of the Year."

Chun expresses how critical graduation is, and how the entire department is dedicated to helping its student-athletes successfully complete their education and earn their degrees. Their focused efforts have increased the NCAA measured GSR statistic, from 66% to 81%. "We help develop their character, we help develop them as teammates, leaders, citizens – all those things, but that graduation piece is first and foremost. It's the important piece that gives them the pathway to a brighter future."



Vice President and Director of Athletics, Pat Chun

Teaching their student-athletes the habits needed to be successful, is also a driving force amongst the staff. "Part of The Pacific Institute that I enjoyed - and complements what I reaffirm with our coaches - is that you are who you are habitually. Your habits dictate your performance. Your habits are who your culture is, so if we don't have the right habits - and they need to start in the classroom - we're never going to win. It's rare in life that you have teams that can show up on gameday and not do well at anything else in life. Historically, if you are putting the effort in, putting the time in, you're committed to being great in every avenue of life, you're going to be great on the sports field as well," Chun comments.

## CONCLUSION

Like any great organization, FAU Athletics continues to grow and evolve. Chun summarizes the journey so far, "At the end of the day, it's our team, and it's our coaches. For us, it's culture-shaping and culture stewardship. We had to start from square one. We had to put together a strategic plan, redefine our mission statement, define what our core values are, and unfortunately, or fortunately, we had to make personnel changes. When you add all of that up together, all that change and creating a foundation is so important, because when adversity hits you, you go to your true self and your core values. Going through all of those exercises early on paid dividends down the road for us."

Accountability across the team is paramount to the success and unity amongst the department.



FAU Football Team, after winning 2017 Boca Raton Bowl

Chun is committed to be a leader and role model to the staff, and setting the example to continue moving forward. "If they don't see you do it, they're not going to do it. There is not one thing I would ask our staff to do that I wouldn't do myself. I am first to apologize to my team if I've made a mistake. I need them to understand there is no one that holds me more accountable than myself. It's living the behavior that I want out of our team, and when you see it within our team, making sure it's noticed and it's complemented, it's highlighted and it's celebrated... I tell our team - every day is gameday."

Chun concludes, "I'm really proud of my team. The heart and soul of every organization is the team, and we have great people here, and great people define great organizations. Our ability to keep growing as an athletic department is really hinged on the great people that we have been able to accumulate here at FAU."

*"I am very cognizant of the fact that leadership is given to me by others, but I am also cognizant of the fact that it's my duty to lead, and make that choice every day to lead, understanding that I serve this group and always serve the greater good. The Pacific Institute, the mentors I have, the books I read, all impact who I am as a leader."*

*~Vice President and Director of Athletics, Pat Chun, Florida Atlantic University*

**There are many shining examples of coaches and their teams who have embraced a championship mindset at Florida Atlantic University. Here are two of those stories.**



# FLORIDA ATLANTIC

## WOMEN'S SOCCER, LED BY HEAD COACH PATRICK BAKER:

Women's soccer Head Coach Patrick Baker and his coaching team were Chun's first hires at FAU. In the four years Coach Baker has been with Florida Atlantic, the team has become one of the top teams in Conference USA and in the state of Florida. Baker attributes a lot of their success to recruiting the right people, and creating an environment and culture that they can thrive in, both athletically, socially, and academically.

Now in his 28th season of coaching college soccer, Baker notes that when he first joined FAU, the soccer team lacked consistency, accountability, leadership, and fostering new leaders amongst the student-athletes. Having turned other teams around in his career, Coach Baker states, "If you really want to take a program to national heights, there's just a lot of things that go into it, and I feel like we've developed a pretty good blueprint along the way. I felt like we could do some great things here in Boca Raton, at FAU."

Baker explains how they began their journey at Florida Atlantic, "We just didn't come in and say, 'this is what we're going to do.' We asked a lot of questions. I've always shared with my assistants; we're like sponges. We're just asking questions. Eventually the players tell you what they want. Then, you've got that information that you can best use moving forward, and the players also feel there's an investment from their end."



*Head Coach Patrick Baker, FAU Women's Soccer*

Baker shares Chun's culture philosophy, and echoes the holistic approach. In fact, while Baker was a coach at Cal Berkeley, he, and the head women's soccer coach Neil McGuire, created the philosophy – 'Live Like Champions.' Coach Baker states, "I loved the sport. I loved teaching. I loved coaching. I loved mentoring. We created 'Live Like Champions.' It's not play like a champion, it's not get your academics like a champion, it is live your life like a champion, in all facets... When I left to come to FAU, I told Neil I really want to take this, because it talks about so many things that we both felt were important."

Upon hearing about the work with The Pacific Institute, Coach Baker requested to join as soon as the program was available. "I wanted to be first in, because we were implementing our 'Live Like Champions.'"

Coach Baker notes that TPI's program has had a significant impact on his student-athletes. By participating in life balance exercises and self-reflection, Baker believes his athletes are being taught the skills necessary to be successful as they journey through their life. "They are walking around with their heads held high, because they're living like champions. They know that we want to be the best role models we can on campus and in the community."

Since working with The Pacific Institute and TPI facilitator Paul Herfurth, Coach Baker has also observed that the department is moving in a really positive direction. They have spent time sharing best practices, stories and experiences, and discussing affirmations, team chemistry, and referring back to TPI concepts.

The girls' soccer team has experienced huge successes both on and off the field. The team has had three consecutive seasons with double-digit wins, and played in their first conference title in fall of 2016. With team success comes individual success. The Conference USA Defender of the Year in 2014 went on to sign a pro contract. They have also had the C-USA Scholar Athlete of the Year for women's soccer in 2015-16, and 2016 C-USA Goalkeeper of the Year.

*"I'm forever thankful that FAU made the commitment, made the financial commitment, have made a continual commitment, to have The Pacific Institute, and more importantly, Paul, to be around our staff, our department, and our players. I tell our girls it can be life-changing if there's thought and there's buy-in. The buy-in changes when it just becomes part of your regular routine, by creating the good habits, and that's what our players have really started to do."*

*~Head Coach Patrick Baker, FAU Women's Soccer*

Off the field, the United Soccer Coaches organization gives out an annual yearly certificate if a team has above a 3.0 GPA. When Coach Baker arrived at FAU there were no certificates on display. During seasons '14-'15, '15-'16 and '16-'17, the team earned that award. "There's a lot of great players, but if they are not first and foremost good people and good students, it just doesn't matter. When you're trying to build something, the foundation has got to be strong," states Baker.

Appreciation for the community plays an important role in Baker's philosophy. "We just finished preseason, and every girl wrote three handwritten notes to either restaurants we went to, or our grounds crew, or our sports information people, or people that helped get us into different events. To see people light up, from a handwritten note, a thank you and a handshake, I just feel like they're totally invested. And when it's a living, breathing part of your program, it's just awesome. That wasn't the case when we first got here, but every year we've matured, we've grown into it."

The team hosts a yearly banquet, and at each ceremony, Coach Baker explains that out of all the awards, the 'Live Like Champions' award is the most coveted. Voted on by the entire soccer team, the award is then handed out by TPI facilitator, Paul Herfurth. This mindset is indicative of the culture Baker and his coaches are fostering within the team. "We recruit really good people, and I think our culture is wrapping their arms around them, it consumes them, and they want to be a part of it. We've got this matrix - an evaluation of where they're at with different things in the 'Live Like Champions.' But to be a true champion, you have to bring others with you. You not only affect change in yourself, but you've got to affect change within our team. And that's what's most exciting to see, is the number of our upperclassmen really being champions because they're bringing either teammates or classmates with them on and off the field."

Coach Baker's passion is evident. "I'm so proud of our first true recruiting class, which is this year's senior class (2017). When they came to us, we had lost and we lost and we lost. We had nothing to sell but a vision, and they bought into the vision. And if we can have another successful season, which I think we're shaped up to have, they will leave as one of the all-time winningest classes in FAU women's soccer history... They were not afraid to roll up their sleeves and do work. But they've also invested in each other, they've invested in 'Live Like Champions,' they've invested in The Pacific Institute, and it's just paid off in such a big, big way."



*Head Coach Patrick Baker, FAU Women's Soccer*

Baker concludes, "I'm forever thankful that FAU made the commitment, made the financial commitment, have made a continual commitment, to have The Pacific Institute, and more importantly, Paul, to be around our staff, our department, and our players. I tell our girls it can be life-changing if there's thought and there's buy-in. The buy-in changes when it just becomes part of your regular routine, by creating the good habits, and that's what our players have really started to do."



# FLORIDA ATLANTIC

## FAU BASEBALL, LED BY HEAD COACH JOHN MCCORMACK:

Coach John McCormack has been a baseball coach at Florida Atlantic University for 28 years, and the head baseball coach for the past 10 years. As the resident historian, Coach McCormack has witnessed the immense changes that have taken place within the department.



*Head Coach John McCormack, FAU Baseball*

He describes the culture within the department, "It's a culture of winning. It's not 'You better have a really good season and win more games than you lose, or win conference championships.' We win in everything that we do, in academics and community service and making sure that the young people have a really, really good foundation for when 'the real world starts.' That's the most important thing. I know that for us, for me, I get up every day and provide a good environment and a good place where these kids can grow as young people. I think the department is the same way - we understood that to get better results, we have to invest more in the person, more in the student, not so much the athlete."

Coach McCormack, who participated in TPI's trainings stated, "The Pacific Institute is a perfect example of the things that FAU has done. We've had someone come in and speak not just for a day, but who continually follows up - passing it on from this group of athletes to the next one. The culture of winning - it's everything that we do."

After attending the program for the first time, Coach recalls, "It reminded me that the young people we have in our program need to be part of the process instead of us dictating the process; including them in decisions, including them in the way things are run. To make it more inclusive, that's the big thing." McCormack adds that Athletic Director Pat Chun gives the coaches a forum to talk and share ideas. The opportunity for them to be able to support each other has gone a long way to growing the department's dynamic.

Coach McCormack notes the concepts that particularly stood out to him and his team were turning "have-to's" into "want-to's" and visualization. "Our players would get up in front of the team and walk them through visualization. 'We're going to get off the bus here, going to go to the hotel here, etc.' Those are the two concepts that have a direct correlation to the players."

To help grow his student-athletes, McCormack invests heavily in the success of his players, by understanding the motivation for each student. "They tell me what their long-term goals are, then I help formulate a plan with them. It's good to know their goals, because then I can pull them aside and say, 'you told me you wanted to do this, what you're doing now does not reflect that.' My long-term goals are for the player to have the tools, academically, socially and interactively, to have a good life, whether they go on to professional baseball or if they go on to work on Wall Street."

McCormack continues on to describe the current culture within his team. "We are a very family oriented-type program. There's only been three head coaches, and I've been the constant for 27 years. We're family, we're going to look out for each other, we're going to involve the players. I just think that, because of the help of The Pacific Institute, and especially Paul, it's a little bit more defined. The outside influence of TPI has reaffirmed what we were doing, and I think now it gives us a pat on the back that we're going in the right direction."

And it's not just about coaching the students on the team - Coach McCormack is dedicated to growing



Head Coach John McCormack, FAU Baseball

the other coaches. Previously, McCormack's attitude was "I'll do it myself," but as time has passed, he now empowers and coaches his assistants to take on greater roles and responsibilities. "The more that they are involved in the program, in every little minor detail, the better they are going to be as coaches. They want their voice heard. They want to be part of it, as opposed to being dictated to. That seems to go a long way, better than just walking through the office in the morning and handing out a practice schedule to everybody... It's about trust. To be able to trust my assistants more, and spend more time coaching them up on how things should work and then giving them the power to do it."

As a team that has always performed well on the field, McCormack states, "The history of the program has been really good. But, I think where we've made our biggest strides is as people, where we hold them more accountable as people and we hold them more accountable as students. In the last five years, that's the biggest and the greatest change that we have seen." He goes on to say, "My future goals for every player is that they have a really good life, and that we give them the tools to accomplish that. My job is to

make sure that they are service-oriented towards their teammates, towards the community, towards the next generation of baseball players."

McCormack summarizes, "Our goal is to be better than anybody in our conference and be better than anybody in our state in taking care of the player... Like everybody here, I think that Paul and The Pacific Institute has really helped us with that. Our selling point in baseball and in the rest of the department is, we care about you more than anybody else does as a person. I always say to recruits that you have to find a place where your worth to that program is not wrapped up in your ERA or your batting average. I think that's really important - there's worth to you at FAU baseball because of the person you are, the teammate you are, and not the fact that you hit fourth or you're the Friday Night starter."

He concludes by saying, "At FAU, we have a group of really good, dedicated people that care about the student-athletes. Paul's work here has reaffirmed to everybody at the right time in our history, that we need to concentrate on people more and not just concentrate on wins. When you're chasing wins, you take a lot of shortcuts, and you forget a lot of things that are important. If you care about the players on a personal level, when the times get tough, they're going to perform, because they care about you."

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*~Head Coach John McCormack, FAU Baseball*

## About The Pacific Institute®

The Pacific Institute is a global consultancy with over four decades of expertise in delivering customized solutions that empower organizations and individuals to improve performance and reach their full potential. Founded in 1971 in Seattle, Washington, we've served clients in over 60 countries and 23 languages. We've worked with over half of the current Fortune 1000 companies, as well as governments, educational institutions, professional athletes and sports teams, and other organizations. To date, more than 6.5 million people around the world have participated in our programs.

