



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
SAN ANTONIO

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT WITH ROA DATA

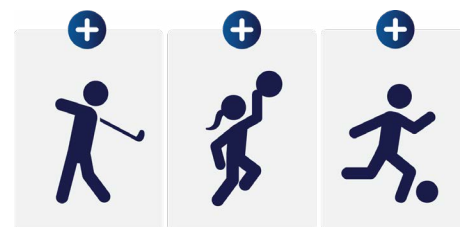
Texas A&M University-San Antonio (TAMU-SA), a public university, is a rapidly growing Hispanic-serving institution with over 7,000 students. Before 2020, the university did not have an athletics department. However, in January 2020, TAMU-SA took its first steps to establish an athletics program from scratch, despite challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, the university proudly offers softball, men's golf, men's and women's soccer and basketball, with plans to continue expanding.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Launching a new athletics program posed challenges, especially as TAMU-SA worked to define budgets, build rosters and create a strong student-athlete experience. As part of the Texas A&M system, one of the university's goals is to enhance school pride, support enrollment growth and contribute to the well-being of its students. The university is also committed to health, wellness and supporting its military-affiliated population, with 1 in 6 students connected to the military in some way.

USING DATA TO INFORM STRATEGIC DECISIONS

Darnell Smith, TAMU-SA's Director of Athletics, turned to the [Return on Athletics® \(ROA\) tool](#) to help guide these efforts. The ROA platform allowed him to evaluate and compare data from similar institutions within the NAIA, providing insights into roster sizes, net return, net tuition revenue, financial aid and sports expenses. By leveraging these metrics, Smith developed a data-driven business plan that enabled TAMU-SA to strategically plan for the expansion of its athletic offerings, including the addition of men's and women's basketball in the 2024-25 academic year.



MAXIMIZING RESOURCES FOR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

"I'm a data kind of guy," Smith explains. "When I look at comparable or similar-sized institutions, I get a sense for the type of resources that they're already using, so I can maximize the resources that I have."

The ability to compare TAMU-SA's data against other institutions in the NAIA and Red River Athletic Conference not only supported budget decisions but also enabled Smith to identify opportunities to enhance enrollment and student success. By triangulating data and examining trends, TAMU-SA was able to ensure its resource allocation remained competitive, aligning investments with institutional goals.



Starting from nothing and being able to build something, the data is there to make the best-informed decisions moving forward.

Darnell Smith

TAMU-SA's Director of Athletics

EXPANDING ATHLETICS FOR LONG-TERM GROWTH

Armed with comprehensive data from the ROA tool, Smith was able to present a fact-based proposal to his administration, outlining the costs and projected returns associated with expanding the athletics department. This evidence-based approach was crucial in securing approval for TAMU-SA's basketball programs and will continue to shape future growth plans.

"The ability to compare and contrast has been fantastic," Smith said. "Starting from nothing and being able to build something, the data is there to make the best-informed decisions moving forward."

LOOKING AHEAD

As TAMU-SA's athletics program continues to grow, Smith plans to use ROA data to evaluate additional sports that could benefit both the university and its students. With a focus on creating a thriving, competitive program that supports the institution's academic and enrollment goals, TAMU-SA is well-positioned to continue building on its athletic success.

Texas A&M University San Antonio is an example of how strategic use of data can transform an athletics department from the ground up. The ROA tool provided Smith with the insights necessary to make informed decisions, expand the university's offerings and maximize resources. By continuing to leverage ROA data, TAMU-SA is poised to strengthen its athletics program and contribute to the institution's growth and student success.



BUILDING AN ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT FROM SCRATCH | TAMU-SA

Listen in to Darnell Smith in conversation with ROA Director Alan Grosbach.

[LISTEN TO PODCAST HERE](#)



**WINNING
DECISIONS**

ADDING SPORTS UTILIZING COMPARATIVE DATA

For more information on evaluating and optimizing your own athletics programs, explore NAIA's Winning Decisions executive education program.

[Winning Decisions Module 4: Using ROA to Inform Decisions through Comparison](#)