

Culture and Program Building

Culture and Program building is a never-ending pursuit. It starts with setting the standards and team building and living it every single day. Every year we will graduate seniors and bring in more members to our program. The onboarding process for all newcomers is extremely important. The faster we can bring new members into the fold, the easier it will be to maintain the program standards and culture. We will know we've accomplished our goals when returning players are onboarding the newcomers into our culture.

The following document outlines who we are. It illustrates exactly what will allow us to compete with the best in the conference. As you will see, there are very few "rules". We operate by focusing on what we **SHOULD** be doing and what will allow us to be a championship program. Standards and culture win championships! This is the recipe for champions!

8 TYPES OF TEAM CULTURE

There are 8 types of culture. As a team progresses from type 1 to type 8, they become more cohesive, caring, and create a championship mentality. Utilizing our standards, values, and team building we will strive to build and maintain a Championship Culture!

1. ***Corrosive Culture***: Conflict, negativity, cliques, gossip
2. ***Country Club Culture***: Entitled, goal is to "look good", soft, allowed to coast
3. ***Congenial Culture***: Focused on getting along, not honest or candid (truth may hurt)
4. ***Comfortable Culture***: Sets reasonable standards but won't push people | No collective "team mission"
5. ***Competitive Culture***: Focus on results and relationships but can be destroyed by a team member
6. ***Cut-Throat Culture***: All about winning | Character is of little value | Relationships are not important
7. ***Constructive Culture***: Members are committed to being successful and willing to work hard
8. ***Championship Culture***: Trust, respect, constructive feedback, and team pride

THE 2 RULES

1. Our rival will be referred to in 2 ways:
 - a. By their color
 - b. By their location in relation to our campus (e.g. "the team out west")
2. Rival colors will not be permitted in the facility
 - a. No rival colors in team meetings
 - b. No rival colors in team workouts
 - c. No rival colors at practice
 - d. No rival colors at team activities

THE STANDARDS

The standards of our program consist of the ways we will conduct ourselves at all times. The standard is how we will behave in our pursuit of excellence. The standards of our program are the manifestations of my coaching values.

1. ***The Elements of a Fire*** – The following are characteristics by which we will conduct ourselves. The third point is the behavior, however, we will relate the elements specifically to our mascot. The following example is for a program called the “Prairie Fire”.
 - a. The Spark
 - i. It all starts with the spark – fire doesn’t exist without the spark
 - ii. The spark must flash at the right time with the right intensity for the flames to rise
 - iii. Being the Spark means we do what we’re supposed to do, when we’re supposed to do it, to the best of our ability!
 - b. The Flame
 - i. The flame is a part of the fire – just as the athlete is part of the team
 - ii. Occasionally, a flame will shoot out of the fire, ultimately making the fire larger, brighter, and more intense – however, the flame always returns to the fire
 - iii. Being the Flame means understanding that what’s good for the team is good for the individual, and what’s good for the individual is good for the team – do everything in your power to achieve individual greatness as it will bring the team with you, but recognize you will always come back to the team
 - c. The Fuel
 - i. Fire is destructive – it consumes its fuel source
 - ii. The only way for fire to continue is to feed it
 - iii. Being the Fuel means understanding success is not permanent – no matter how much success we have, we will still lift, practice, and train as champions
2. ***Rock Fight Mentality***
 - a. Never quit mantra!
 - b. In a rock fight, there is no point system – you either continue to throw rocks, or you lose
 - c. We will always throw rocks in every aspect of our lives – never quit!
 - d. We will support our teammates in the rock fight
 - i. Life is hard – sometimes we run low on rocks
 - ii. Look to the person to your side, when they grow tired, give them rocks to throw – support them
 - iii. Know that when life gets hard, your teammates will provide the rocks
3. ***Integrity***
 - a. How you do ANYTHING, is how you’re do EVERYTHING
 - b. Process driven – not results driven
 - c. Take pride in everything that you do – if your name goes on it, own it!
 - d. There’s no such thing as “good enough” – if you’re willing to attach your name to something, make sure that it is done to the best of your ability and gets the job done!

4. *Love*

- a. We will love each other
- b. Love is the conscious decision to put the well-being of others at the forefront
- c. Love is telling other people that you care about them and their success outside of what they can do for you
- d. Love is sacrificing so that others can rise

5. *Fail*

- a. We will fail in our life
- b. The only way to achieve greatness is to step outside of our comfort zones – to do things that we’ve never done before – sometimes we fail
- c. You will never be a failure if you don’t quit
- d. After you fail, learn from it, get better, chase greatness – we will live by this in all aspects of our lives

“Never throughout history has a person who lived a life of ease left a name worth remembering”
Theodore Roosevelt

6. *Fun*

- a. This is a game! It should be fun!
- b. Bring passion and excitement to everything that we do
- c. Purpose, energy, and positivity always

TEAM BUILDING

Where our standards guide our behavior, team building is how we will come together as a unit. This is where we will build team chemistry and become one cohesive unit. This doesn’t happen overnight and will need to be built and enforced on a yearly basis.

1. *It All Starts with Trust*

- a. Cornerstones of Trust
 - i. Your Character – your integrity, motive, intent, and ability to make consistent good decisions
 - ii. Your Competence – your capabilities, skills, results, and track record for accomplishing agreed upon goals
 - iii. Your Composure – your ability to retain your character and competence in crisis, down-times, setbacks, and in times of high stress, anxiousness, and conflict
- b. Building Trust
 - i. Be honest. Call things what they are and let people know where you stand. Demonstrate integrity and do not manipulate people or distort facts.
 - ii. Show respect for people and their roles. Genuinely care for others and show kindness in the little things that people do.
 - iii. Be open, authentic, and real, in a way that people can verify. Err on the side of sharing and disclosure.

- iv. Show loyalty, give credit freely, speak about others as if they were present. No bad-mouthing others behind their backs. Keep things confidential if they are meant to be.
- c. **Keeping Trust**
 - i. Deliver the goods. Do what you said you would. Make things happen. Do what you were hired to do. Do things on time with great quality. No excuses.
 - ii. Keep getting better. Improve your ways and develop new and better methods. Change based on feedback and expand your competencies.
 - iii. Be willing to confront the “real stuff”. Do not pretend things are fine and don’t ignore the real issues.
 - iv. Clarify your expectations. Don’t assume your expectations are clear and shared. Make sure they are shared by speaking on them repeatedly.
- d. **Restoring Trust**
 - i. Make things right when you have been wrong. Apologize. Overcome any pride and make your wrong a right
 - ii. Step up your accountability. Take responsibility for results. Don’t finger point or blame others. Hold yourself to a new and higher standard.
 - iii. Be humble. Listen first and ask for help when needed. Don’t think you have all the answers all the time. Find out what’s important to others.
 - iv. Trust others. Extend trust to others based on the situation, risks, character, and competence of the people involved.

2. ***High Character People***

It is a primary responsibility of this coaching staff that our student-athletes leave this institution as better people than when they got here. The foundation of this idea is to produce individuals with extremely high character. These characteristics and attributes will carry with the student-athletes for the rest of their lives. The following are qualities that every person should work to perfect throughout life:

- a. Discipline – the ability to control one’s own behaviors and desires to accomplish a task, goal, or mission – the end game is bigger than any individual
- b. Accountability – the ability to always accept responsibility or account for one’s actions – never pass the blame to others – protect your teammates
- c. Love – the conscious decision to put the well-being of others in front of your own, regardless of what they can do for you; sacrifice
- d. Respect – the value to regard the worth of people or things and to treat them with consideration, care, and concern
- e. Leadership - possessing attitude and demeanor that would cause other men to follow and produce an environment of greatness
- f. Toughness – doing what must be done no matter the conditions, no matter how you feel, and no matter the odds

- g. Commitment – the pledge to do something and continue to do long after the mood you said it in has left
- h. Consistency – the ability to replicate a process or activity with the same level of quality repeatedly, no matter the adversity

The ability of our athletes to master the qualities listed above is of top priority. We will dedicate specific time to teaching and expressing these qualities to produce high character people.

During fall camp, all members of the football program will participate in “Character Class”. Every other day, we will engage in small, intimate group sessions discussing each of these qualities. Each coach on staff will be assigned a word to discuss. The athletes will be divided into small groups with a healthy mixture of different position players and years in school. These talks are more than lip service. Coaches will always start the conversation because we want to show that it is ok to be vulnerable and open with people. This also starts the process of breaking down walls and building up relationships. This is an opportunity to create relationships between coaches and players, and among players. Character class will create an environment where student-athletes want to buy in to the program and their teammates.

3. *Eternal Fire Ceremony*

On the first day of camp, all sophomores, juniors, and seniors will be given a candle stick. They will be told they need to hold on to it and keep it safe. The seniors will bring their candles to the last guaranteed practice of the season.

At the conclusion of the practice, the entire team will circle up. One at a time the head coach will invite the seniors into the middle of the circle. The head coach will then light the senior’s candle. The head coach or position coach will then tell a meaningful story about that senior and what they contributed/meant to the program. The senior will then have his turn to speak. He will answer 3 prompts:

- a. What is your proudest moment or greatest accomplishment while at this institution?
- b. What is your favorite memory of your time with the football program?
- c. Advice or words of wisdom for your younger teammates:

After the senior is done speaking, he will call out a freshman to join him in the middle. He will say to the freshman, “I have chosen you to take my candle because...”. He will then blow out the candle and hand it over to the freshman and say, “Now my fire and legacy burns through you”. The ceremony then continues until every senior has gone.

The freshmen now have the responsibility to carry that candle through their entire collegiate career. If they choose to leave the program or lose the candle, they are losing the light of those who came before. They must take ownership and accountability for their teammates.

4. *Leadership Council*

Strong leadership is a necessity in any successful organization. Leaders are not simply born. We must develop leaders! The leadership council will allow us to teach and guide our potential leaders. The council will have opportunities to go through lessons and meetings with the head coach, and they will also have opportunities to make impactful decisions throughout the program, including disciplinary measures. Allowing this committee to make impactful decisions will drive home the point that this program belongs to the players and they must be invested in it for us to be successful.

a. Building the Council

- i. The council will consist of representatives of each class
 - i. 4 seniors
 - ii. 3 juniors
 - iii. 2 sophomores
 - iv. 2 freshmen
- ii. Each class will vote for their representatives on the committee (e.g., seniors will vote only for their four senior reps, juniors will vote only for their 3 junior reps, etc.)
- iii. Voting will take place at two different times throughout the year
 - i. At the beginning of the January term, the team will vote for the leadership council that will take us through the off-season, pre-season camp, and the next fall
 - ii. Freshmen will vote for their representatives at the conclusion of fall camp to join the council that was voted on at the end of the previous season
- iv. Being voted to the council in one year does not guarantee you the spot until you graduate – you must be voted in every year

b. Eligibility for the Council

- i. Voted in by popular vote by your graduating class and verified by coaches
- ii. Must be in good academic standing with the institution
- iii. Must have been part of the program last season
- iv. Must have 90% attendance in the weight room

c. Duties of the Leadership Council

- i. Be voice from the players to the coaches and from the coaches to the players
- ii. Communicate any potential player issues to the coaches and vice versa
- iii. Disciplinary hearings
- iv. Off-season competition team captains
- v. Assist in off-season scheduling
- vi. Meet with head coach every other week and as needed
- vii. Set the pace and tone for the rest of the team and program
- viii. Must attend all leadership council meetings
- ix. Must complete all leadership activities and lessons
- x. Represent football program at various events
- xi. Assist in deciding different themes (e.g., hashtags, mantras), team gear, uniform design, and other ideas that go with the football program

d. Leadership Lessons

- i. Discuss different leadership styles and competencies of leaders throughout many industries
- ii. Leadership activities looking at situations and how to handle them – open debate and discussion
- iii. Summer readings – each summer the head coach will assign a book to read on the topic of leadership
- iv. Making tough decisions and having difficult conversations, especially disciplinary issues

5. Off-Season Team Competition

During the off-season we will engage in different activities to compete as team. The leadership council will be divided into captains and will choose team names based on the characteristics listed in our character class (e.g., Team Leadership, Team Toughness, etc.). The captains will then have a draft to select their team from the remaining student-athletes on the roster. Teams can earn and lose points based on the following criteria:

- a. Perfect weekly weight room attendance and toughness competitions
- b. Class attendance and performance
- c. Team activities (e.g., dodgeball, basketball, capture the flag, etc.)
- d. Hosting recruit overnights
- e. Assisting in recruiting events and campus tours
- f. Poor communication with coaches or support staff
- g. Positive or negative comment/report from faculty, staff, or administration on campus
- h. Community Service (completed independent of team service activities)
- i. Non-mandatory tutoring
- j. Participating in and/or attending campus events, sporting events, art & music events, etc.

At the conclusion of spring practice, we will have a team cookout. At the cookout, the results of the competition will be announced. The team will be served burgers and hot dogs, with the winning team receiving steaks. The teams will also receive their food in the order which they finish in the competition. The purpose of this competition is to build accountability to each other, increase team chemistry, teach leadership, and emphasize the little details that go into a championship effort and mentality.