

SPORTS

Carli Lloyd empowers Women in Leadership

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Carli Lloyd brought inspiration and star power to UW-Superior on April 8 as the featured speaker for the third annual Women in Leadership event.

Hosted by UWS, Yellowjacket Athletics and Cenovus Energy-Superior Refinery, the event attracted student-athletes, alumni and community members for an evening focused on leadership and growth.

The program featured a moderated discussion on Lloyd's decorated career and the mindset behind her success, followed by a meet-and-greet. The two-time Olympic gold medalist and World Cup champion reflected on perseverance, leadership and the lessons that continue to shape her.

The event's impact extended beyond campus. For Niya Wilson, a UWS soccer alum and current athletics business and compliance manager, the broad turnout stood out.

"It was super cool to be able to get her in the doors here and speak to the student athletes, the alumni, anybody who's interested," Wilson said. "Not only did it benefit us, but it benefited the community."

Wilson said the presence of younger athletes made the experience especially meaningful, recalling one girl taking notes during the discussion. Moments like that show how events like this can shape the next generation.

For Liberty Dickerson, a senior soccer player who recently completed her collegiate career, this was a monumental experience. A longtime Lloyd

fan, Dickerson attended the event wearing a jersey she purchased at the 2015 Women's World Cup.

"I remember watching Carli Lloyd and I just fell in love with her...she's continuously been my favorite player," Dickerson said. "Being in the same room as her just felt crazy."

Dickerson described meeting Lloyd as a full-circle moment after looking up to her for years.

"It just felt so full-circle to be almost done with college and meeting my hero who really has inspired me to not just to play soccer, but to move on to that next level because of her work ethic and dedication to the sport," she said.

Both Wilson and Dickerson emphasized UWS' commitment to supporting and representing women in sports.

"I think it's super empowering the way our athletics department handles integration of women in leadership, women in sport and just chooses to educate and expand upon that space," Wilson said. "It's inspirational for sure and something that has impacted me on a personal level."

Dickerson echoed that sentiment, noting the difference she has experienced compared to other programs.

"I've been at some other spaces where, maybe women's sports was secondary, but here it really feels equal," she said. "I'm really proud to be at a



Senior Liberty Dickerson meeting Carli Lloyd in her 2015 World Cup jersey at the Women in Leadership event on April 8.

Photo contributed by Liberty Dickerson

place where this is something that they support."

Lloyd's visit left a lasting impression on those in attendance, reinforcing the impact of events like Women in Leadership.

UWS vs. UMD Unified

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In the Mertz Mortorelli Gymnasium on April 25, UW-Superior, along with University of Minnesota Duluth, hosted UWS vs. UMD Unified, a basketball tournament that marks the end of season. UWS invited teams from Superior, Duluth, Rockridge and Cloquet to find a champion after their eight-week season.

Unified is an organization that works through the Special Olympics to be able to find local interested people. Different colleges and high schools can host teams, and wherever there is a chapter of Special

Olympics, there is usually a Unified chapter.

Megan Anderson, an assistant professor of education at UWS is the co-faculty advisor for UWS Unified along with Dr. Kelsey Benson. The two work together to get the program where it is today. Anderson explained that, "Unified is a club put together by Special Olympics, and what we love about it is that there's Special Olympics Wisconsin and special Olympics Minnesota, so we get to bring them together over state lines and really have not only a superior Wisconsin community, but twin ports as well."

The special UWS connection



Students from the UW-Superior Unified Team in a huddle with student coach before the first game with student coach Zame Nelson on April 25 in Mertz Mortorelli Gymnasium.

Photo by Emily Tews | Promethean



Unified athletes from the UW-Superior Unified team running towards another play after making a basket April 25.

Photo by Emily Tews | Promethean

comes through UW-Superior students, and Anderson said that "the coaches you see out there are all UWS students, and what they are is they are students in course TED270, the name of the class is multicultural education, it's taught by Dr. Kelsey Benson, and they have to do an academic service learning project, a partnership, internship during that class, so they are coaches."

The outcome of this partnership has been amazing for both students and participants. "Kelsey and I knew this was going to be awesome. It has

surpassed all of our expectations of what our UWS students can do. They have shown nothing but leadership, grace, and inclusive practices, and our community partners, which are our athletes. Have absolutely been the most talented and charming and capable athletes, it's been a joy," Anderson said.

Anderson continued sharing her joy about how the experience has gone this year. "It has nothing to do with us, it has everything to do with our UWS students and our community athletes."

Laughlin returns, takes reins of men's club hockey

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Dan Laughlin makes his return to UW-Superior as the new club hockey coach. He has a history here at UWS as a women's hockey coach, having coached them for 21 years before retiring after the 2023-2024 season.

As Laughlin looks back on his time here, he said, "It was awesome. Coaching for 21 years here, that's something special, and that's something that I'm very blessed to be a part of and now I start a new chapter, doing it again."

When Laughlin was asked about what he can bring to the club program, he said, "Just bring a lot of what I've learned in my past. It's just bringing all that wisdom and knowledge together and building a foundation here for this program. I think I have a really good, kind of a plan and place...to make that happen, and we're starting to do that right now."

Laughlin said that he wants to work with the team to the point that "they're not stressing about this or that. Get them in here and make them feel comfortable, just keep the plan moving forward."

Laughlin believes that becoming formidable comes with time. "I think that comes with time. As the program builds, you're gonna start getting more notoriety...I think the ACHA, which is the league we're in, is really growing."

Laughlin said that for this season the overall goal is getting into a conference. His aim is to get into the WCHA.

"I think once you get in there, you can start going for division championships, and start hanging banners in Wessman Arena," he said.

In his closing thoughts, Laughlin said, "I'm just super excited to be in this position. I really have a strong passion for UW-Superior. For almost half my life, I've been here. So, it's really fun to be back."



Dan Laughlin coaching women's hockey at Wessman Arena in 2024.

Photo by Holden Law | Yellowjacket Athletics