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Touchdown! UW-Oshkosh launches women’s flag football with kickoff as soon as spring 2026

Written by Grace Lim, University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh

UW-Oshkosh will introduce women’s flag football as its 21st sport, creating new opportunities for student-athletes and positioning the Titans at the forefront of a game growing rapidly nationwide.

Chancellor Manohar Singh announced the addition of the sport to UWO’s athletic program at the 2025 Fall convocation.

“This is an exciting addition to Titan athletics and UW-Oshkosh overall,” Singh said. “By embracing women’s flag football, we are responding to current, prospective, local, national and global student-athletes’ interests, helping them join and celebrate a sport quickly becoming a fixture in collegiate and international competition. It is one of the fastest growing sports anywhere. Its launch at UWO expands student offerings and helps us continue to strengthen enrollment.”

Darryl Sims, assistant chancellor of athletics, echoes the chancellor’s enthusiasm for the sport.

“Women’s flag football is one of the fastest growing sports in the country, and we are thrilled that UW-Oshkosh is at the forefront of this movement in Division III athletics,” Sims said. “The excitement surrounding this sport is undeniable and our student-athletes will now have the opportunity to compete in a program that has both incredible momentum and a bright future nationally.”

Women’s flag football has experienced a surge of participation nationwide at the youth and high school levels, with 15 states already sanctioning the sport and many more running pilot programs. The NCAA has identified women’s flag football as part of its Emerging Sports for Women program, placing it on a path toward championship status by 2028.

According to the NCAA, as of spring 2025, 16 colleges and universities across the country offered varsity flag football. More than 20 additional schools have announced plans to begin competition by spring 2026. UW-Stout launched its program in spring 2025, making UW-Oshkosh the second UW university to compete at the level.

The growth is also evident at the high school level. Nearly 50,000 girls played high school flag football in 2024-25, according to the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS). Sixteen state high school athletic associations have sanctioned girls flag football for 2025-26, while another 18 states are engaged in independent or pilot programs.

Women’s flag football also has a global spotlight on the horizon, with the sport set to debut as an Olympic event in the 2028 Los Angeles Summer Games.

Planning for the new UWO program will ramp up in fall 2025, when a national search for the Titans’ first head coach begins. Recruiting is already underway, with UWO focusing on Wisconsin and the Midwest while also connecting with high school programs where the sport is sanctioned or emerging. UWO leaders are working toward official kick off as soon as spring 2026. They plan on strong recruitment of new student-athletes for fall 2026 and subsequent spring seasons. The Titans’ home games will be played both at the UW-Oshkosh Rec Plex Dome and J. J. Keller Field at Titan Stadium. Spectators will be encouraged to bring their own seating for contests held inside the dome.

**Competition**

Flag football teams compete 7-on-7, with average rosters of about 25 players. Games are played in four 12-minute quarters on a field 80 yards long by 40 yards wide.

The offense has four downs to cross each 20-yard line for a first down, with an option to punt on third down. Failure to advance results in a change of possession. Teams score six points for a touchdown and may attempt an additional one- or two-point play from five or 10 yards out.

Unlike tackle football, there are no field goals or point-after kicks. Instead of tackling, competitors wear flag belts with two pop-flags fixed at their hips; play ends when a flag is pulled.

The proposed NCAA playing schedule begins in early January and runs through Memorial Day, with a maximum of 12 contests per season.