



From the ground up

Road bumps aside, Clarissa Chun is spearheading the effort to bring the Iowa women's wrestling team to the mat.

Chloe Peterson
Sports Editor

Three days a week, 15 women's wrestlers trot into the Carver-Hawkeye Arena strength and conditioning room. On a typical day, the Iowa women's wrestling team works through medicine ball circuits while a 2010s pop playlist blares over the practice room speakers. From there, they move on to weight training. This is when Iowa women's wrestling head coach Clarissa Chun joins the circuit. She attempts a shoulder rotation while lying face down on a press bench and laughs when she can only complete one rep. Chun approaches the weight rack, completing weighted body presses alongside her athletes. Someone teaches her how to do a weighted dumbbell lunge, accidentally getting hit by one of her athletes in the process. Chun stays with her team during the entire strength

and conditioning process, helping move weights, testing out different activities, and giving encouragement to her athletes. Her 4-foot-11 frame fits in with her athletes — the 41-year-old coach could pass as a collegiate wrestler today. Most coaches don't attend their team's strength and conditioning sessions, but Chun makes a point of heading to the basement strength room every time. "It's more opportunity to connect with our athletes to see what they're doing and try to motivate them," Chun said. "And we like just giving a little banter, you know, like telling whichever athlete, 'Oh, the lightweight is pushing more weight than you, what's going on?' Just messing around and just opportunities to connect." It's also an opportunity for her to get a workout in — something she said she should be doing more often. And she can never pass up trying a new conditioning circuit.

"She's been training her whole life," strength and conditioning coach Zach Walrod said. "So, when she sees something she hasn't done before, she's like, 'I need to try that.'" Chun's training, wrestling, and coaching career eventually brought her to Iowa. Now, she's building the first Power Five women's wrestling team in the nation.

A historic addition

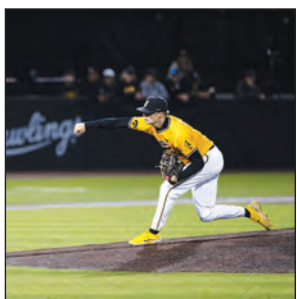
Athletic director Gary Barta announced the addition of the Iowa women's wrestling program in an early morning release on Sept. 23, 2021. Multiple factors went into the decision for the UI to become the first Power Five program in the nation to sponsor a women's wrestling team, Barta said at a press

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Marco's Grilled Cheese to open new locations
Grilled cheese enthusiasts can look forward to two new Marco's Grilled Cheese locations in Coralville and on First Avenue in Iowa City.



Taking the next step
Iowa baseball right-handed pitcher Ty Langenberg is confident about making the jump from a Sunday to Friday night starter for the Hawkeyes this season.

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Traversing through the smoke
Despite self-imposed and external hardships, female firefighters overcome challenges each day to better their communities, with support systems backing them every day.

DITV

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Some UI students use fitness trackers, despite data inaccuracies

A UI cardiologist explains inconsistencies of wearable fitness tracking devices.



Photo illustration by Matt Sindt.

Sophia Mamakos
News Reporter

As wearable fitness trackers become a popular way to measure everyday activity, University of Iowa students are continuing to use the devices, despite worries from health care officials. Fitness trackers, popularized by the companies Apple and Fitbit, are wearable devices or devices with computer applications that record a person's daily physical activity. The trackers also relay health and fitness data like the number of calories burned, heart rate, steps, and breathing. About one in five U.S. adults regularly wear a fitness tracker, the Pew Research Center reported in 2020. UI Hospitals and Clinics Cardiologist Linda Lee said the devices cannot be fully trusted. Lee

said she often answers questions regarding fitness-tracking devices and the information they gather. "Easily five or six people a week will come to the office with their device or with a long list of information that they've gleaned from their device," Lee said. "A lot of the time, they're confused about what the information means or what they should be paying attention to." Lee said the most common concern about these devices is the heart rate measure, which depends on the person's age, fitness level, the medicines that they take, or medical diagnoses. "The other issue with heart rate is that there are heart rate alarm parameters that can be activated on some of these devices," Lee said. Ellie Gilbert, a UI first-year student and

IC Human Rights Commission leadership push community engagement

The commission's chair and vice chair spoke with *The Daily Iowan* about their plans to improve racial equity in Iowa City.

Jack Moore
News Reporter

The newly elected Iowa City Human Rights Commission chair and vice chair are pushing for improvements to affordable housing and grant programs for Iowa City residents and businesses. The Iowa City Human Rights Commission elected Roger Lusala, the president and CEO of the Mayor's Youth Empowerment Program, as its chair and Sylvia Jons as vice chair Jan. 24. The Iowa City City Council appoints nine members for the Human Rights Commission to serve for three years. The commission's responsibility is to educate the public on illegal discrimination and civil rights and advise policy changes to the Iowa City City Council. Lusala said he was emboldened to join the commission in 2021 after the killing of George Floyd in May 2020. "I wanted to be more on the front end of really pushing for change and implementing change," Lusala said. The Human Rights Commission has been working on its own strategic plan, which is separate from the city council and is currently being implemented. The plan has three areas of focus to improve community engagement. "We have so many nonprofits in Iowa City addressing racial equity and social justice issues, so we want to be a resource for those organizations," he said. "We want those organizations to come to us so we can collaborate on how we can really make our city a better place to live." The commission also plans to work on improving their process of allocating grants to groups serving social justice and racial equity. The commission

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Clarissa Chun's journey to Iowa

1999
Chun considers going to Iowa to join the men's wrestling team, instead joins Missouri Valley College's women's wrestling squad.

2003
Chun places fourth at University World Championships.

2008
Chun gets fifth place at 2008 Beijing Olympics.

2012
Chun qualifies for London Olympics at Carver-Hawkeye Arena, earns a bronze medal at the Games.

2017-21
Chun works as an assistant U.S. women's national team coach in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

November 2021
Chun is named Iowa women's wrestling program's first-ever head coach.

November 2023
Iowa women's wrestling will start competing in duals at Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

Infographic by Marandah Mangra-Dutcher



Grace Smith/The Daily Iowan

Chun works at her computer after practice at Carver-Hawkeye Arena in Iowa City, on Nov. 28, 2022. Chun said she enjoys coaching much more than the busy work in front of her computer but knows the value of emails and phone calls to keep the program moving forward.



Grace Smith/The Daily Iowan

The team chats during a break in practice at Carver-Hawkeye Arena in Iowa City on Nov. 28, 2022. Chun emphasized the importance of keeping lighthearted moments present throughout practice. "I think women think they want that grind," Chun said. "But I think if they have that current grind 24/7 they will burn out a lot quicker." Chun said the team knows when to flip the switch from joking around to getting serious and ready to wrestle.

like world team trials or national Olympic trials. Whoever's top three you work with, it's not like you're recruiting them to train."

But Chun still succeeded in recruiting the first Power Five athlete just five days after she was officially announced as head coach.

Kylie Welker, who committed on Nov. 23, 2021, was the No. 1 pound-for-pound recruit at the time of her commitment and had worked with Chun before as a junior and senior world championship competitor.

"Being the first of the first program, it was honestly like an honor," Welker said. "It was really exciting when coach Chun told me she wanted me to be the first signee ... I think I chose Iowa mainly because when I came here, it just felt right. I love the atmosphere, and obviously, Iowa's known for wrestling. So, what better place to wrestle than at the University of Iowa?"

Welker wasn't planning to go to college before Chun offered her a spot on Iowa's team — she wanted to go to a regional training center to pursue her Olympic dreams. But Welker thought Chun and Iowa women's wrestling would give her the same Olympic opportunity while also helping her grow in different areas.

While Chun was building her roster, she also had to find a coaching staff up to the task of pioneering a Power Five women's wrestling team.

She first found Gary Mayabb, manager of USA Wrestling Greco-Roman programs from 2017-22 and a longtime USA Wrestling coach, in May 2022. Two months later, Chun added Tonya Verbeek, a former wrestler and coach for the Canadian National Team.

Neither Chun, Mayabb, or Verbeek had NCAA experience when they started at Iowa, but the three work through problems together.

"She's very inclusive," Mayabb said about Chun. "With her leadership style, she's not worried about the fact that she has to be a leader, she knows she is. What she does is she takes in the best parts of everybody else's leadership, in-

cluding student-athletes. To help build the program, it's been everybody. All hands on deck, if you would. Everybody's got a hand in it."

And while they may not train with their athletes during strength and conditioning, Mayabb and Verbeek join Chun those three mornings a week in the Carver training room.

While the Hawkeye women's wrestlers are helping build the team from the ground up, Welker said they've also hit some roadblocks, including shared mat space with the men's team and a small locker room.

"At the beginning of the year, our coach used this analogy and put this picture of these construction workers literally building a plane as a plane is flying," Welker said. "And I'm like, 'That's literally us because we're building this program.' But we're also part of this program before it's even like completely up and running. So, it's definitely cool to see, and it'll be cool to see how far this program gets and how much more we can build women's wrestling."

Iowa is currently building a wrestling training center to give more space to both its men's and women's programs. The Goschke Family Wrestling Training Center, which is located next to Carver-Hawkeye Arena, will open ahead of the 2024-25 season.

Iowa has 15 women's wrestlers on its roster with plans to increase to 28 next season, Mayabb said. The Hawkeye women's wrestlers are training in Iowa City and competing unattached before starting dual competition next season.

"It's crazy good," Mayabb said. "It's special; we have really good young women. They're driven. They know what they want. They operate extremely well together, and they have close-knit bonds."

The Hawkeye coaches host two practices a day, and the first is from 9:30-11:30 a.m. The nightly practice, which usually starts at 6:30 p.m., is optional for the wrestlers, and Chun said about 50 percent come in for individual work with the three



Grace Smith/The Daily Iowan

Associate head coach Gary Mayabb observes wrestlers climb ropes during practice at Carver-Hawkeye Arena in Iowa City, on Nov. 28, 2022. Mayabb, with 52 years of coaching under his belt, was named associate head coach on May 13, 2022. Chun said the program is able to function better with help from Mayabb and assistant coach Tonya Verbeek. "My coworkers are awesome to work with," Chun said. "Both are crazy passionate about wrestling." Chun said Mayabb is great with culture building and Verbeek has good leadership skills.

coaches.

Between practices, Chun, Mayabb, and Verbeek have staff meetings, calls, and emails to fill their time. While it amounts to a 12-hour day every day, Chun said she wouldn't have her coaching experience any other way.

"We could divide and conquer in the sense of, 'Coach Mayabb, you take this day; Tonya, you take this day; and I take the night,' or whatever, and rotate, but I don't, and we just love what we do," Chun said. "We enjoy being on the mat. Those moments, those evening individual moments are times that we really get to know the athlete."

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Grace Smith/The Daily Iowan

The team huddles up at the end of practice at Carver-Hawkeye Arena in Iowa City on Nov. 28, 2022. The team's official schedule and dual meets start next year, but wrestlers are currently competing in tournaments and earning titles.