

Strategic Master Plan: A Decentralized National Network for Greco-Roman Wrestling Development

1. Executive Mandate: Reimagining the American Greco-Roman Landscape

The United States must fundamentally restructure its approach to Greco-Roman wrestling to secure international dominance. Historically, the sport has been relegated to a "post-collegiate add-on," a failed strategy necessitated by the lack of a Division I varsity home. To succeed, we must move beyond this fragmented model and adopt a vertically integrated, decentralized system. This shift replaces the "single point of failure" inherent in the previous USOEC/Northern Michigan model with a distributed pipeline that ensures institutional resilience.

By spreading resources across multiple regional hubs, the system becomes insulated from localized university budget cuts or administrative shifts. This strategy explicitly combats the "Friction of Style-Switching"—the primary enemy of American development—by ensuring athletes enter the international arena with years of style-specific technical mastery rather than attempting to convert after a folkstyle career. Initial implementation is backed by the \$250,000 "Grow Greco" seed funding goal, targeting a transformation from a "wait-and-see" approach to proactive, early technical ingestion.

Strategic Paradigm Shift

Feature	Current Status Quo	Proposed Distributed Pipeline
Recruitment Logic	"Wait-and-See" (Post-Collegiate)	Early Technical Ingestion (Middle/High School)
Systemic Risk	Single Point of Failure (Single-site)	Decentralized Redundancy (6–7 Regional Hubs)

Institutional Anchor	D1 Varsity Dependent	D2, D3, NAIA, & Academy Integration
Developmental Focus	Style-Switching (Conversion-based)	Continuous Style-Specific Literacy
Funding Model	Fragmented / Pay-to-Play	Endowment-Backed / Scholastic Integrated

This distributed architecture moves the sport into wrestling-heavy regions, anchoring development where a deep-rooted combat culture already exists.

2. The Hub Architecture: Geographical Anchors & Academic Integration

To bypass the high-cost Division I freestyle "arms race," we will anchor hubs in lower-division academic institutions (D2, D3, NAIA) & wrestling-rich corridors. These institutions offer a stable collegiate environment more receptive to specialized high-performance training programs.

Regional Anchors & Partner Institutions

The network consists of 6 primary regional anchors, "piggybacking" on established youth & scholastic infrastructure:

1. **IL/WI (Midwest):** Leveraging a massive folkstyle base with burgeoning international interest.
2. **Pennsylvania:** Utilizing historical assets like the Pennsylvania RTC—which recently secured a \$55,000 grant—to serve high school & elite athletes.
3. **Minnesota:** A traditional stronghold for technical Greco culture.
4. **New Jersey:** High-density elite youth infrastructure & club saturation.
5. **Ohio:** Centralized talent pool with deep institutional wrestling support.
6. **Colorado:** Anchored near the Olympic Training Center (OTC) for direct National Team overlap.

7. **Partner Candidates:** Specific bases include **Luther College (Norse RTC), Wabash College, Doane University, Simpson College, University of Dubuque, & Northern State.**

Systemic Redundancy & Coach Certification

Decentralization creates a redundant network that protects the national identity from institutional volatility. To ensure a unified technical language, we mandate a **Tiered Certification Track** for coaches:

- **Level 1 Certification:** Focus on youth safety, par terre defense, & basic body lock techniques.
- **Level 2 Certification:** Advanced throws, high-amplitude mechanics, & complex gut-wrench transitions.

This architecture provides multiple landing points for athletes, ensuring that if 1 institution faces challenges, the national pipeline remains operational & literate. These physical hubs serve as the landing points for a revamped scholastic feeder system.

3. The Scholastic Multi-Discipline Model: Seasonal Realignment

Maximizing existing high school infrastructure is the only way to scale the sport affordably. We must adopt the "Track & Field / Swimming" model, where multiple disciplines operate under a single program budget & athletic identity.

Two Seasons, Two Styles Framework

We reconcile the seasonal conflict by framing wrestling as a multi-discipline sport with distinct varsity lettering opportunities:

- **Fall/Winter Folkstyle Season (The "Cross Country" Equivalent):** Focuses on foundational mat awareness, scrambling, & the traditional American competitive base.
- **Spring Greco-Roman Season (The "Track & Field" Equivalent):** Immediately following winter championships, the program pivots to upper-body amplitude & par terre dominance. This ensures the wrestling room remains an active, funded institutional asset year-round.

The Greco Minimum Standard (GMS)

To prevent technical dilution, all hubs & scholastic partners must adhere to the **Greco Minimum Standard (GMS)**, a Level 1–10 progression system modeled after USA Gymnastics:

- **Levels 1-3:** Focus on clinch literacy, underhook mastery, & safety-first landing mechanics.
- **Levels 4-7:** Introduction to par terre transitions & standardized gut-wrench sequences.
- **Levels 8-10:** Elite technical mastery, including high-amplitude throw execution & international tactical pacing.

This foundation ensures that elite tracks draw from a pool of athletes who are already style-literate, transitioning the focus to the elite development ladder.

4. The Elite Performance Pathway: Lessons from Global Soccer & Gymnastics

American Greco-Roman must adopt the "Academy-First" logic of global soccer & the skill-based progression of USA Gymnastics. This removes the dependency on a non-existent collegiate varsity system.

Tiered Progression Ladder & RTC Cohorts

The pathway is a clear, assessment-based ladder consisting of 3 distinct RTC Cohorts:

1. **Scholastic Graduates:** Seniors & recent graduates learning the full Greco structural framework.
2. **U20 Development:** Athletes building tournament IQ & high-level technical bases.
3. **National-Probable:** Athletes focused on international pacing & Olympic-level protocols.

Promotion between cohorts is governed by **standardized assessment trials**—evaluating clinch literacy & par terre transition efficiency—ensuring the pipeline is meritocratic rather than "hope-based."

The Affordability Mandate

To eliminate the "pay-to-play" barrier, we adopt the **MLS NEXT** funding model. The top tier of the development ladder must be scholarship-backed & fully funded through the **Talent Endowment Fund**. By securing corporate sponsorships and leveraging the "Grow Greco" initiative, the hub system ensures that talent & drive, not parental wealth, determine an athlete's access to the podium.

This elite pathway requires a robust domestic theater to test these cohorts before they face international opposition.

5. The Domestic Theater & International Immersion System

High-stakes domestic competition is required to build "Match IQ" & generate content value.

Operational Components

- **National Greco-Roman Dual Series:** A hub-vs-hub traveling league hosted at partner universities to build regional rivalries & fan engagement.
- **Unified Coaching Doctrine:** Led by National Greco-Roman Head Coach **Herb House** & Olympic Champion **Ismael Borrero Molina**, ensuring every hub speaks a standardized technical language.
- **International Immersion:** Annual "Spring Break" exchanges (e.g., Bulgaria) to expose athletes to European technical thought. This system is designed to make the "European odyssey" of athletes like **Payton Jacobson** unnecessary by providing elite training & international-caliber partners domestically.

The Flag Football Precedent

We will utilize the regulatory mechanism seen in the rapid rise of girls' flag football. By reaching a **100-team participation trigger**—as seen in the Pennsylvania model—Greco-Roman can force state sanctioning. This scholastic legitimacy triggers NCAA "Emerging Sport" status, unlocking institutional support & additional collegiate scholarships.

This domestic theater serves as the final filter, ensuring athletes are fully prepared for the Olympic apex.

Conclusion

This Strategic Master Plan provides the structural innovation required for American Greco-Roman dominance. By replacing the collegiate-dependent model with a decentralized network of regional hubs, we establish a resilient pipeline. Through scholastic integration, Level-based technical standards (GMS), and the elimination of financial barriers, we ensure that American wrestlers no longer "find" Greco-Roman—they master it from the grassroots to the Olympic podium.

For more, please view coachshannyn.com/resources, coachshannyn.com/articles, & coachshannyn.com/international-blog.