Concussions have become a growing topic within the NCAA and the public. The NCAA is requiring athletic departments to have clear guidelines for concussion management and more specifically a return-to-play policy. A concussion is a change in brain function following a force to the head, which may be accompanied by temporary loss of consciousness, but is identified in awake individuals, with measures of neurologic and cognitive dysfunction. Concussions are often difficult to detect since most don’t lead to a loss of consciousness or have other immediately recognizable symptoms. Tests such as brain MRI, electroencephalogram, and blood test can often return normal results.

Concussions typically occur from blows to the head either from contact with another player, hitting a hard surface such as the ground, ice or floor, or being hit by a piece of equipment such as a bat, lacrosse stick or field hockey ball. A student-athlete can still receive a concussion even wearing a helmet.

Husson Sports Medicine Concussion guidelines:

- At the beginning of each school year, every student-athlete will sign a statement in which the student-athlete accepts the responsibility for reporting their injuries and the injuries of others to the Sports Medicine staff. The student-athletes will also be given educational material on concussions.

- At the beginning of each school year, every coach will receive an informational sheet as well as the concussion management protocol and will sign a statement acknowledging receipt of the information and their role in the management of concussions.

- Baseline assessments are available to all student-athletes at Husson University. In accordance with NCAA recommendations, first-time student-athletes participating in the sports of football, field hockey, men’s and women’s soccer, softball, baseball, men’s and women’s lacrosse, and men’s and women’s basketball will automatically have baseline testing done.

- When a student-athlete shows any signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion, the athlete will be removed from practice or competition for the remainder of the day by either a member of the coaching staff or Sports Medicine staff. If removed by a coaching staff member, the coach will refer the student-athlete for evaluation by a member of the Sports Medicine staff. The protocol listed below will be followed:

1. If a student-athlete is suspected of having a concussion, initial testing will include the SCAT3 test that specifies a symptom assessment, physical and neurological exam, cognitive assessment, balance exam, and clinical assessment for spine trauma, skull fracture and intracranial bleed.

2. If a student-athlete has been diagnosed with a concussion, the student-athlete will be monitored for deterioration by a teammate, roommate, or guardian and both will be given written instructions upon leaving the athletic training facility.

3. Student-athletes will be monitored daily and must be symptom free for two consecutive days before returning to activity. A third day may be added at the discretion of the Sports Medicine staff depending on the level of mental activity the student-athlete has or has not been exposed to since the injury occurred.

4. Student-athletes will be removed from class if necessary for a period of three days. A letter will be sent to the student’s professors via the Faculty Athletics Representative. The student-athlete will be re-evaluated after the three day time period and his or her return to class will be determined at that time.
5. If he/she performed a baseline IMPACT test, scores will be evaluated for comparison to their baseline. During that time, he/she is given restrictions from team activities that would cause cardiovascular exertion (i.e. team practices, cross training, weight training, etc.).

6. If symptoms persist with no marked improvement for more than 5 days, physical therapy may be added as a part of the student-athlete’s recovery plan.

7. If symptoms persist with no marked improvement for 7 to 10 days, an appointment will be made with the Husson University team physician if needed.

8. When returning to participation, the student-athlete will be gradually incorporated back into play at the discretion of the Husson Sports Medicine staff following the return-to-play protocol listed below.

9. Final authority for return-to-play shall reside with the team physician or the physician’s designee.

- A student-athlete with worsening symptoms, especially worsening headache, nausea or vomiting, increased confusion, garbled speech, lethargy or extreme sleepiness, trouble using their arms or legs, convulsions or seizure activity should be transported immediately by ambulance to the emergency room. Any athlete with neck pain will be evaluated by the Sports Medicine staff and if deemed necessary, will be treated as if a cervical spine injury is present and the appropriate emergency procedures (cervical spine immobilization, emergency room transfer, etc.) initiated.

**Graduated Return-to-Play Protocol:**
(McCrory P et al. Consensus statement on concussion in sport—the 5th international conference on concussion in sport held in Berlin, October 2016)

- No activity – complete physical and cognitive rest
- Light aerobic exercise – walking, swimming, or stationary cycling, no resistance training
- Sport-specific activity with no head impact
- Non-contact sport drills and resumption of progressive resistance training
- Unrestricted training
- Return to competition

If a 2nd concussion occurs within the same season, the student-athlete will remain out of practice and competition for a minimum of 14 days. The above protocol will be followed after the 14 day time period.

If a 3rd concussion occurs, the student-athlete is out for the remainder of their season. Multiple sport athletes will be handled on a case by case basis. The previous history of concussions will be taken under consideration at the discretion of the Husson Sports Medicine Staff.

*Visiting sport team members evaluated by the Husson Sports Medicine staff will be managed in the same manner as Husson University student-athletes*