

Commissioners: Difference Makers Beyond the Game

People often ask me, what do commissioners do? As you may suspect, we manage our conference, the member institutions, staff and sponsored sports championships throughout the year. It's what people may not "see" day in and day out that truly make up the life of a conference commissioner.

The life of a commissioner is often filled with both the expected and unexpected realities that come with leadership in athletics. While we try our best to anticipate the opportunities, it is often the challenges that push us to be strategic, problem solving wizards. Ultimately, we have the greatest opportunity to build a vision with a true team of member institution presidents, conference administrators and the student-athletes themselves — all of whom we serve on some level.

We are constantly keeping a pulse on local and national current events that may have an influence and/or impact on our organizations' decisions and our conferences' growth. We are digging to understand the needs of our key stakeholders and executing plans to meet the needs of our membership — be it contract negotiations, media rights agreements, championship bids, governance and compliance, acquiring sponsors, engaging fans and the list goes on. These are the parts of the commissioner's job many don't see — beyond the game.

However, what thrills me most is that I am in a position where I can weave together athletics and academics along with leadership to make



Jacquie McWilliams



a difference in communities. It's one thing to plan and execute a well-attended championship game, but it is another to take a strategic and holistic view to see that championship as an opportunity to make a deeper impact.

There is an immeasurable value in identifying partnerships and sponsorships that can further support a conference's mission and vision. We have worked hard to create a range of partnerships that engage communities where the CIAA hosts championships. For example, the CIAA has used its historic basketball tournament to impact not only 150,000 fans annually, but also more than 8,000 youth in and around Charlotte, N.C. In fact, we have partnered with Coca-Cola, Food Lion, Nationwide and Toyota (our conference sponsors) to support fan activations, community programs and scholarships for our member institutions.

We partner with the leadership in Charlotte, including the City of Charlotte, the Charlotte Regional Visitors Bureau and the Charlotte Hornets to execute a true tournament experience for our student-athletes, alumni, fans and sponsors. I am so proud to be in a position of leadership to make a difference in the lives of not only the student-athletes we serve, but also to work in communities that support the mission and vision of the conference.

So what do commissioners do? We are not only strategic thinkers and problem solving wizards; we are difference makers, beyond the game!

Jacquie McWilliams is the commissioner of the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association.



FCS ADA

FCS — The Total Package

One of the key components that came out of the FCS meeting this past January in Washington, D.C., was how we as FCS member institutions need to get the "message out" about how our student-athletes are different than those at the FBS level, and the positive influence that our student-athletes have on our campuses.

There is no question that the student-athletes in FCS work and compete just as hard as those who participate in the FBS level. As we all know, many of our student-athletes can play and be successful athletically at the upper level of college athletics.

However, one significant difference between FCS and the other Division I members is how we promote and make it a priority that our student-athletes integrate themselves into the fabric of the institutions they attend. At the FCS level, it is not athletics 24/7. We strongly encourage our student-athletes to hold key leadership roles in campus organizations.

At Presbyterian College (PC), and for member institutions within the Big South Conference, this is a priority. For example, at PC, we have a total of 17 student-athletes from 10 different sports serving on the 40-member Honor Council Committee. The Honor Council is charged with investigating and hearing alleged violations of Presbyterian College's Honor Code. The members of this important council are selected by their student peers from across the entire campus.



Brian Reese



Another example of a student-athlete's participation in campus leadership is starting junior wide receiver Devron Glenn, who was selected by his peers to oversee Presbyterian College's Interfraternity Council. Devron will be responsible for initiating policies and procedures and working closely with the highest level of our administration, making sure that Greek Life at Presbyterian College remains a positive influence. It is important as FCS members that we continue to highlight these types of accomplishments by our student-athletes.

As we look toward the future, there will be many changes coming to college athletics in the next three to five years. We will see a changing financial landscape that will require us as administrators to work together to ensure we continue to provide our student-athletes the great experience they are getting at the FCS level. Although there will be changes at the FBS and BCS levels that will appear as though we are marginalizing our student-athletes, we know that this is not the truth.

It is important to remember that student-athletes select FCS institutions based on three key components: strong academics, strong athletics and the opportunity to integrate themselves into the life of the college. This opportunity alone differentiates us from the rest of Division I.

FCS is truly the total package!

Brian Reese is the director of athletics at Presbyterian College and a member of the FCS ADA Executive Committee.