

*Athletics Directors Association*  
**BUILDING BRIDGES WITH THE OTHER SIDE OF CAMPUS**

We all know about the “other side of campus” and some of the perceived challenges that exist. From the perspective of athletics, it is everyone else (faculty, staff, non-student-athletes) on campus and from the view of the other side of campus, it is athletics. The relationship between these two communities, like any relationship, is a complex dynamic with the goal of positive relationships rather than an “us versus them” attitude.



*Pennie Parker*



The relationship can take on a very new meaning when there is a change in leadership and/or the reporting structure on campus — especially when the person athletics reports to is not familiar with intercollegiate athletics. Athletics has both an opportunity to educate the new leadership as well as create, renew and enhance the existing relationships with staff throughout the other side of campus.

While change is always a challenge and there is a tendency to protect one’s turf, athletics and the new leadership have a wonderful opportunity to team up with new approaches to build relationships within and outside of athletics. Educating a leader from the other side of campus who is not familiar with intercollegiate athletics forces an introspection by athletics leaders which can reveal the many positive attributes athletics administrators are familiar with (student-athletes are leaders and role models, achieve higher GPAs and graduate at a higher rate than the general student body, etc.). The internal examination also can bring up areas that need improvement to create a win-win environment for all concerned. Mutual respect, listening, communication and a cross-campus collaborative approach have been successful in moving forward.

Some specific action items that are part of this continuous process of creating relationships between the new leadership, athletics and the other side of campus have included:

- Respecting the time of the athletics oversight, preparing one-page documents summarizing specific issues.
- Athletics leadership participating on campus committees, which is an opportunity for the other side of campus to work with and create professional relationships with athletics staff.
- Increasing communication between student-athletes and campus leadership with monthly breakfasts.
- Creating awareness of the many tasks and activities coaches and teams are involved in by submitting bullet points monthly to campus oversight.
- Increasing visibility of campus leadership by their participation in activities provided to student-athletes such as etiquette dinners, drug/alcohol training.

- Using some of the athletics promotional items to share with campus staff members who are key partners with athletics such as Security, Student Records, Student Financial Aid to recognize their contributions and efforts.
- Using weekly compliance tip emails to connect with leadership in the campus community and increase their awareness of the unique demands on student-athletes.
- Leveraging campus communication to get out athletics news. While the official athletics website contains the most current information regarding the happenings in athletics, campus Public Relations sends out daily, as well as, weekly emails outlining campus activities and awards (including athletics events and conference players of the week) to all employees, staff, faculty and students.
- Open door policies by the new athletics oversight and monthly meetings create communication opportunities for athletics staff and student-athletes alike.
- Inviting sport oversight to staff and SAAC meetings.
- Increasing school spirit with appearances by athletics mascot at campus-wide functions.
- Athletics teams partnering with campus Greek organizations in charity events such as fundraising for Make-A-Wish Foundation.
- Involvement of numerous athletics teams in campus-wide awareness and initiative programs such as anti-hazing, anti-bullying and positive body image campaign.
- Invite all college administrators, selected faculty and staff to annual end-of-the year sports award banquet.
- Athletics administrators speaking to various campus committees; for example, the director of athletics addressing the Student Life Committee regarding back-to-back-to-back student-athlete valedictorians.

Finally, the opportunity to work with others on campus and broaden our horizons has led to a much more supportive and collaborative environment for the coaches and student-athletes. By educating others about intercollegiate athletics, an increased awareness of the daily challenges faced by the student-athletes has gained momentum. Administrators and faculty have begun to notice and appreciate the time demands placed on student-athletes. Administrative attendance and support at our athletics events also has increased.

In general, the many positive attributes of college athletics have been highlighted. During the process, athletics has recognized the support and collaborative efforts of an engaged and supportive administration can be priceless.

*Pennie Parker is the director of athletics at Rollins.*

**REMINDER**

DII ADA Lifetime Achievement Award Nominations due December 12. Visit [Div2ada.com](http://Div2ada.com) for details.