

## D2 ADA | CORNER

In today's climate, it is difficult for Division II athletics departments to balance finances, academics and compliance while maintaining competitiveness. These challenges are met by the administrative staffs at each institution on a daily basis. The Division II Model Athletics Department tool kit has been an informative document to guide athletics directors and presidents on the expectations of operating an effective athletics program. It is an arduous task to achieve these objectives with a sufficient size administrative staff and full time coaches, and I often wonder how some of us are doing it with multi-role administrators and part-time coaches. The answer obviously lies in our passion for athletics and dedication to the student-athlete experience.



Susan Cassidy



While the dynamics associated with part-time coaches are unique, they are a reality. Part-time coaches are just that, part time. The truth, however, is that we expect nothing less from them and their programs than we do from full-time coaches. If we want to work toward building successful and compliant programs, we need to depend on the extra diligence of our administrative staffs to overcome this issue. Full-time coaches who have additional duties within their athletics departments that include equipment management, laundry, study hall, vehicle maintenance, SAAC oversight and special events to name a few, allow the full-time administrators the time to concentrate on compliance, budget, sponsorships, facilities, game operation, student-athlete safety and scheduling.

Limited access to part-time coaches during business hours makes routine tasks more laborious and draining. E-mails and telephone calls replace the desired face-to-face encounter. The intent of an e-mail is often misconstrued, which simply creates confusion, thereby generating more e-mails. Notification of a change in practice time or location often takes hours to resolve. Telephone contact is not always available because of the part-time coach's regular employment commitment. The inability to finalize plans in a timely fashion affects athletics trainers, facility personnel, student-athletes, coaches and opponents.

The compliance office is responsible for monitoring the student-athletes' academic performance. It is difficult to expect much assistance from coaching staffs that are generally not on campus to watch attendance at classes, monitor study hall hours and gauge adherence to team rules. The administrative staff is often the only set of eyes. I remember reviewing one of my coach's expectations for his players (team rules) and thought while the idea of "no hats in class" was a good rule, it was virtually a rule the coach could not monitor until he arrived on campus in the evening for practice. Again, it becomes you and your staff enforcing their rule. We have no problem guiding the student-athletes, but it is nice for them to see us as something other than the enforcer.

Scheduling is complex without considering the intricacies involved with the different work schedules of part-time coaches. We need a magician, not a scheduler, to mesh strength of schedule, travel, competitiveness and student-athlete well-being with the needs of the part-time coach. We must consider that the start time of the game allows the coach enough time to get from work to campus, if they will be able to take a day off to leave early for the game five hours away, if they can be available for an overnight trip mid-week and if it is advisable to allow a coach that works the early shift at his job in order to coach to drive a van of student-athletes back and forth to an away contest.

Earlier in the fall, our tennis team made our conference playoffs. While we were certainly overmatched in our opponent, the opportunity to participate in the postseason for the first time was exciting for the student-athletes. The coach took the day off to make the scheduled match time. At the last minute, the match was cancelled due to high winds and rescheduled for the following day. While the coach could make the match, he was not able to take another day off from teaching to transport the team. Our associate athletics director stepped in to drive the van and returned after the match to cover our home volleyball contest. This would be a very unlikely scenario with a full-time coaching staff.

Coaching meetings never take place during business hours. They are held in the evenings to accommodate the coaches' work schedules and are on dates that have no scheduled contests. This eliminates the rare opportunity for a free evening for our administrative staff. Individual coaching meetings, CPR, first aid and AED certification and NCAA coaching certification tests are also done later in the evening after practices or on weekends. The administrative staff is directly affected, as they facilitate these sessions.

Representation by part-time coaches on NCAA Regional Advisory Committees is challenging since the calls are generally scheduled early in the day and may be lengthy. Understanding the importance of representation, we make a point of getting our administrators selected to these committees.

While there is a great deal of adjusting and maneuvering involved with a coaching staff that is part time, I can appreciate their commitment and dedication. They are putting in the hours to stay on pace with full-time coaching staffs, but just at more unconventional times. Partnerships and an appreciation for each other's demands are even more necessary in this type of work environment. While the student-athletes are at the core of the Bylaw 17 Life in the Balance initiative, there is no doubt that small staffs would benefit immeasurably as well. Each day I realize how lucky I am to have an administrative staff that is energetic, enthusiastic, understanding and capable of multi-tasking. While we are challenged with doing more with less, we understand that we will do whatever is needed to build our athletics program.

Thanks for this article to Susan Cassidy, director of athletics at Molloy College and member of the D2 ADA Board of Directors.