



## NAAC | CORNER

Lately it seems not a week goes by that we don't see a few articles at least referencing NCAA compliance. So many of the articles are tough to read because we see colleagues who would normally be behind the scenes being questioned about whether they have done their jobs, being encouraged to resign, and being held responsible for things that are difficult, at best, for them to have control over. But there are positives to focus on in compliance.



Kate Hickey

# R

The good part about a number of these articles is that people outside of our profession have started asking the right questions of the right people to gain a better understanding of what compliance administrators do on a daily basis and they've been communicating that to readers within and outside of athletics.

As I read these articles, the question that comes up many times is the question of responsibility for making sure an institution, its personnel and student-athletes are operating within NCAA rules. So, whose responsibility is it?

The answer is, compliance is a shared responsibility. It seems like we should all know this. Unfortunately, though, compliance is not always the shared responsibility that it should be, and so we must evaluate how shared the responsibility is on our campuses and take steps to ensure everyone understands their role.

When we say compliance is a shared responsibility, it does not just mean shared by a staff of compliance professionals on a particular campus — no matter how large the compliance staff is. It means shared by everyone from the president or chancellor of the university to the athletics director, development staff, coaches, equipment staff, student-athletes, senior and other level administrators, boosters, and everyone in between.

As compliance administrators we certainly have a pretty big role in tying together our respective institutions' efforts to comply with NCAA rules. We need to ensure that appropriate and sufficient systems are in place to monitor and detect compliance with the rules, keeping in mind that we do not always have to be the individuals directly responsible for

oversight of the particular system. There should be compliance systems on our campuses that fall under the jurisdiction of offices such as the ticket office, the business office, the financial aid office, the registrar's office and any number of other offices within and outside of athletics. The key is that systems are in place and are functioning.

We also need to ensure that education is in place with all of the aforementioned staff members and groups, and any other individuals or groups that touch our programs. Through our educational efforts, not only do we need to help others understand what the rules are and how they apply in real life situations, but we also must ensure our co-workers and others understand their compliance-related responsibilities. They need to know the appropriate channels for asking questions, as well as what they are expected to do when they see or hear something that doesn't seem right to them or that they know to be a violation. Educational efforts also must convey the consequences of being on the wrong side of the rules and further, the consequences of not dealing with a violation or potential violation in a timely and forthright manner.

We also have a special obligation to ensure our head coaches have a good understanding of creating an atmosphere of compliance and monitoring the activities of their staff, as required by Bylaw 11.1.2.1. Gone are the days when a head coach can claim ignorance or hide his or her head in the sand. It's on the books now — they are responsible for what goes on in their program and they will be held accountable if something goes wrong.

When it comes to our student-athletes, while we can't expect them to know the NCAA Manual inside-and-out, we can arm them with information that will help them understand the rules that apply to their daily lives. And, we must impart on them the importance of asking questions. They must take an active role in protecting their eligibility.

While we do take on a healthy helping of responsibility for compliance, as we should, appropriate monitoring and education efforts will provide others an understanding of and the tools to participate in their shared responsibility for compliance.

Kate Hickey is the 2011-12 NAAC President and senior associate athletics director at Rutgers.

