N4A CONVENTION HISTORY -- FORTY YEARS
AND STILL GOING STRONG

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

1975, ST. LOUIS, MO

(Information provided by Fred Stroock)

At the 1975 NCAA Convention, N4A was unofficially formed. Thirteen athletic/academic advisors attended. Among them were Dr. Clarence Underwood (Michigan State U.), Bill Munn (U. of Iowa), Jeff Kaplan (Ohio State U.), Dave Eckstrand (U. of Minnesota), Dr. Frank Downing (U. of Kentucky), and three women (the only women at the NCAA Convention). These female pioneers were Ursula Walsh (U. of Nebraska), Gertrude Peoples (U. of Washington), and Elizabeth “Buzz” Kurpius (Indiana U.). Issues discussed included study table, testing, time management, and working with coaches. An important outcome of this meeting—and one that continues 40 years later—was getting to know other academic/athletic advisors. Those attending the organizational meeting would have someone to call when faced with problems or just needed support.

1976, ST. LOUIS, MO: “Putting Things Together”

1977, MIAMI BEACH, FL: “Academics and Athletics—Are They Compatible?”

President: Dr. Frank Downing (U. of Kentucky)

(Information provided by Dr. Frank Downing)

Our mottoes in the early years were the following:

1. Have we won any battles today in the War against Ignorance?
2. Is everyone eligible who MUST be eligible?

The first two “conventions” were more planning and strategizing sessions rather than the conventions we know today. No keynote speaker. No awards. We believed we were and still are a professional organization. We meet once a year and work hard to discuss pertinent issues, and when the work is over, we party hard as well.

The current name of the organization, National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics (N4A), was adopted at this convention. It had formerly been known as the National Athletic Counselors Association (NACA).
1978, ATLANTA, GA: “Continuing on Theme— Compatibility of Academics and Athletics”

President: Chet Doll (Memphis State U.)

(No information available)

1979, SAN FRANCISCO, CA: “Motivating the Student Athlete for Eligibility and Graduation

1980, NEW ORLEANS, LA: “Practical Approaches to Operating an Effective Academic Counseling Program”

President: Dr. Clarence Underwood (Michigan State U.)

(Information provided by Dr. Clarence Underwood)

According to then N4A President, Dr. Clarence Underwood (Michigan State U.), academic/athletic advisors were struggling with their identity as well as the group’s mission and growth. By conducting the N4A annual meeting at the same time the NCAA and American Football Coaches met, N4A might garner more attendees. Faculty representatives became the key conduits between N4A and the NCAA.

Legendary Grambling State University football coach, Eddie Robinson, spoke to members about various methods he used to have athletes earn their degrees. Additionally, Indiana University’s faculty representative, Dr. Wentworth, as well as other faculty reps, attended some of the meetings.

As the Executive Committee planned the 1980 national meeting in New Orleans, discussions focused on the following: increasing membership, growing the budget, refining the mission statement, and developing long- and short-term goals. Another topic was what to call N4A’s members. Some titles included “academic advisor,” “athletic advisor,” and “academic counselor.” Many also had administrative titles which added to the confusion. “Athletic advisor” was chosen to avoid confusion between what we do and what “regular” academic advisors do.

1981, MIAMI BEACH, FL: “Building Morale and Motivation in Student Athletes”

President: Joyce Alexander (U. of Pittsburgh)

(No information available)

President: Dr. Thomas Brennan (U. of New Mexico)

(Information provided by Dr. Tom Brennan)

“I was one of the early period N4A presidents—nearly 40 years ago. Membership in those days was not large. A focus of activity, including the convention, involved outreach with individuals at colleges and universities with responsibility for monitoring the integrity of academic athletic programs and the progress of student athletes; it was a ‘grass roots’ approach.

The keynote speaker was John Bridgers, Athletics Director at the University of New Mexico. UNM had suffered a highly publicized academic scandal, and Bridgers was hired, among other reasons, for his record of integrity and rules compliance. John had a deep regard for professionals in our field. His presentation was inspirational and well received by all in attendance.”

1983, SAN DIEGO, CA: “Support Systems for Counselors and Student Athletes”

President: Diane Johnson (U. of Wisconsin) Deceased

(No information available)

1984, DALLAS, TX: “N4A Academic Legislation—Satisfactory Progress and the Role of Academic Advisors within the University

President: Sally Jones (U. of Wyoming)

(Information provided by Susan Gibbs (U. of Louisville)

N4A’s first “Executive Director” was Richard Esquinas. “He was running things when I first started attending N4A Convention in 1984.” He charged N4A for his services. He wasn’t an academic advisor, nor did he work at any college. It was a lot of money for what we got.”


President: Joe Eivans (U. of Texas-Austin)

(Information provided by Joe Eivans)

“I attended my first convention of what later became the NAAAA in January 1978. I had been selected to follow the first ever full-time academic counselor for athletes, Lan Hewlett, at the University of Texas.
During my presidency, I wanted to do two things. I wanted to call each and every member of NAAAA during that year and to have a personal conversation with each. I also wrote an ‘informative and encouragement letter’ which I sent each member several times during the year. I accomplished this goal.

My other goal was to increase membership. As a result, this increased communication among the members during 1984; we had the largest convention to that time in 1985. There was wonderful camaraderie among our members at that convention and a real enthusiasm and energy to adopt a national agenda. We had workshops, breakfasts, and luncheons with national-type speakers. We even had a Treasurer’s Report. I left as President that January morning in 1985 feeling our association was on its way to bigger and greater things. That has come to pass.”

1986, NEW ORLEANS, LA: “Academic Standards and Student Athletes”

President: Dr. Brian Mand (Florida State U.)*

(Information provided by Dr. Brian Mand)

Dr. Brian Mand (Florida State U.) assumed the N4A presidency from Joe Eivans (U. of Texas-Austin). A record 140 attended the convention. “The eloquent and outspoken” Dr. Joseph Johnson, President of Grambling State University, articulated concerns about “Proposition 48,” which would take effect on August 1. It would clearly have a profound effect on HBCU’s. The SWAC, to which Grambling belongs, had proposed amendments to “Prop 48,” but both amendments failed.

The 1986 convention hosted one of the first public forums for the newly formed Center for Study of Sport in Society (CSSS). Its founders, Dr. Richard Lapchick and Tom “Satch” Sanders, painted a depressing picture of the academic demise of collegiate athletic programs and CSSS’s vision to be part of the cure.

During Brian’s presidency, an agreement was reached to provide N4A members with subscriptions to The Athletic Advisor monthly newsletter as well as the bi-annual journal The National Advisor which later became The Academic Athletic Journal.

Workshops covered topics such as Ethical Standards, Implementing New Programs, Utilizing Assessment Tools, Publishing, Study Hall, Study Skills, and Marketing Programs. A survey showed that more women than men were in the profession (a trend that continues today).

*Dr. Brian Mand passed away in 2014.
1987, SAN DIEGO, CA: “NCAA Academic Legislation and the N4A Committees, Commissions, and Involvement.” (Fondly known as the “Logo” convention)

President: Dr. Lynn Lashbrook (SIU—Edwardsville)

(Information provided by Dr. Lynn Lashbrook)

Before my tenure as President in 1987, I want to backtrack to reflect on my first ever N4A convention in Miami. There was no hospitality suite for members to gather the night before. At the end of the convention luncheon, I was approached by then President Tom Brennan to be a Region Representative as Missouri always sent an advisor to the yearly convention. At the summer planning session, I insisted on hosting a Hospitality Suite to be open throughout the conference.

President Dr. Lynn Lashbrook’s goal was to grow the membership and make it more professional. His keynote speaker was Jan Kemp, the whistleblower faculty member from the University of Georgia. Shockingly, her selection created such controversy that several academic/athletic advisors were not permitted to attend the conference as their AD’s were furious about Kemp being invited to speak.

Several possible logos were presented to those in attendance for possible adoption. No consensus could be reached. “I begged for temporary approval of any one of the four designs promising we’d revisit the subject the following year. The “temporary” logo has been in place since 1987.”

(Information provided by Susan Gibbs (U. of Louisville)

“When we went to Richard Equina’s house for the 1987 convention, He had dinner at his house for a small group. His house overlooked the city, and his wife had fresh flowers delivered daily. She recently had a baby, and a personal trainer came to the house for her daily workouts. That’s when we realized we were paying him too much.”

1988, NASHVILLE, TN: N4: “Athletic Academic Advising: Responsive and Responsible”

President: Dr. Lee McElroy (U. of Houston)

(Information provided by Lee McElroy)

“The issues during my presidency were increasing the membership and resolving the Prop 48 controversy. I wish I could have gotten more people of color into the profession.”

Mother Nature provided a memorable convention; Nashville was paralyzed by a foot of snow. The Opryland Hotel employees couldn’t go home, so they were accommodated by the hotel until they could leave.
Lee didn’t have anyone to do the convention for him, so he asked Tara Singer to assist. Harry Edwards, the keynote speaker, didn’t show up because of the snow storm.

1989, SAN FRANCISCO, CA: “N4A—Making a Difference

President: Bob Bradley (U. of Kentucky)

Back then, our N4A National Office didn’t coordinate conventions. That was the President’s duty. I convinced Barb Deniston to be the Convention Coordinator and put her in charge of the Convention site planning. Since, at the time, we piggy-backed on the NCAA to negotiate room rates, wherever the NCAA had its convention, so did the N4A. It wouldn’t be until 1993 that we broke away from the January meeting time and began our own June meetings.

President-Elect Steve Milburn and the N4A Board stood by me when I was positive we needed to dissolve our Central Office and our association with its director, Richard Esquinas. Our keynote speaker was Alan Page, past Minnesota Vikings’ All-Pro. At the time, he was Minnesota’s Assistant Attorney General.

During my presidency, the role academic/athletic advisors as well as the N4A as an organization would play in “the pantheon of power in intercollegiate athletic circles” came to the forefront. N4A proposed Resolution 56 to the NCAA to simply recognize us and our contributions. However, the resolution was withdrawn before it reached the floor. President-Elect, Dr. Richard McGuire, convinced the SEC to propose the resolution on our behalf, but the SEC removed it under pressure from the faculty representatives. This resolution, thought the faculty reps, would threaten their power in the NCAA structure. [A more detailed account of Resolution 56 will be covered in the forthcoming History of the N4A]

Thanks to Lou Spry of the NCAA and Barb Deniston, we had a highly successful convention. Barb found ways and creatively used resources to accomplish the tasks and put on one of the finest conventions in N4A history.”

1990, DALLAS, TX: “Expanding Our Horizons”

President: Steve Milburn (U. of Louisville)

At the 1990 Dallas convention, N4A unveiled two awards: Distinguished Service and Lan Hewlett. The Lan Hewlett recognized outstanding academic/athletic advising and leadership. Its first recipient was Elizabeth “Buzz” Kurpius (Indiana U.). Joe Eivans (U. of Texas) received the Distinguished Service Award given to an individual who contributed “above and beyond” for
the good of the organization. (Note: Yearly winners will be listed at the end of each convention summary)

A hot topic dominated N4A’s convention program: “Prop 48,” which had been adopted by the NCAA. Its intent was to increase initial eligibility requirements thus promoting academic success for college student athletes. Since N4A opposed the proposed standards, on the surface, it appeared N4A was against higher academic standards. As advisors, we knew the inherent problems of using test scores to predict academic success due to the wide variance in high schools which made comparing grades among schools questionable.

1991, NASHVILLE, TN: “N4A Leads the Way”

President: Dr. Richard McGuire (U. of Virginia)

(Information proved by Dr. Richard McGuire)

Richard’s two clear objectives as N4A President started when he was President-Elect. “One of the duties of the President-Elect in the N4A Constitution at that time was to work on membership. I tried very diligently to make N4A a fun organization as I felt advisors needed camaraderie and an organization that would make them feel good about who they are.”

Richard’s second objective was proposing Resolution 56.

Richard fondly remembers a presenter at the 1979 convention. “We all sat at long tables and held a string to our noses, and on the other end of the string hung a three-inch nail. The presenter had us think “yes”—and by golly, the nail soon started going up and down in a yes motion. He then had us think “no,” and you won’t believe what happened next—you got it.”

The keynote speaker was James Brown, CBS sport broadcaster.

At Richard’s convention, N4A unveiled its newest award named for Wilma Rudolph. The award would be given yearly to student athletes who overcame adversity to maintain their balance and succeed academically. Jackie Newton (UNLV) and her committee had worked on the details of the award since 1989. Originally named the “Phoenix Award,” with permission from Wilma Rudolph’s family, N4A was authorized to use her name.

Lan Hewlett: Gertrude Peoples (U. of Washington)

Distinguished Service: Andy Nixon (UNLV)
Note: As Bob Bradley mentioned, National Conventions were organized by the President and his staff. In addition, region affiliation provided many volunteers from other institutions. The University of Virginia was in Region II, but Region I also contributed efforts to make the convention successful. Susan Gibbs (U. of Louisville) became Convention Coordinator and worked closely with the NCAA to “piggy back” on its connections for negotiating reasonable hotel prices. At the 1990 Dallas meeting, discussions of moving from January to June conventions took root. N4A had gotten large enough to break away from the NCAA and meet in June. January was a difficult time for members to get away because of basketball season and the second semester starting. Susan worked with Louis Spry and Lydia Sanchez, NCAA convention planners.

THE GROWING UP YEARS


President: Dr. Gayle Hopkins (U. of Arizona)

The Anaheim convention was the last to be held in January. President-Elect, Dr. Ferna Phillips (Boston U.) would hold her convention in June, 1993.

During his presidency, Gayle thought N4A had reached a critical juncture in its history. “We can no longer remain reactive and still hope to direct the student athlete toward the demands and rewards of life. I believe in order to fulfill our mission; we must adopt proactive measures to influence student athletes and assure them of a future whether in athletics or a career based on solid academic work.”

Gayle believed the N4A should be a force in how to vote in support of our student athletes. At the time, no conference truly included N4A members in its decision making.

Lan Hewlett: Bob Bradley (U. of Kentucky)

Distinguished Service: Fred Stroock (USC)

President: Dr. Ferna Phillips (Boston College)

(Information provided by Dr. Ferna Phillips)

The Denver Convention was the first meeting held in June rather than January. Susan Gibbs continued as Convention Coordinator, and Sandy Meyer (Penn State U.) was appointed to a two-year term as Program Coordinator.

“In 1993, we finally decided to break with the tradition of meeting with the NCAA in January. Although many people were upset with this change, and we did lose a few members who simply could not come to the convention in June, we weathered the storm and N4A continued to grow and flourish.”

Ferna appointed a Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) chaired by Shirley Becker (DePaul U.). Each region rep selected a topic upon which to focus at regional meetings: Professional Development of the Membership; Staff Development/Self-Improvement Skills; Personal Developmental Needs of Student Athletes; Academic Developmental Needs of Student Athletes; and Programming for New Members (“How To” workshops).

“Establishing our 501 (c) status which allowing us to be financially solvent after a long period of financial indiscretion and insecurity was a major issue. Thanks to Jack Rivas and his wife Deb for late night and early morning phone calls, reports and updates as we tackled setting up our books in a financially solvent way to please the IRS.”

The keynote speaker was Dr. Janet Helms, who at the time was a faculty member at the University of Maryland. (Ironically, she is now a tenured full professor at Boston College) “She enjoyed ‘us’ as a group and the opportunity to have people explore their inner thoughts and feelings regarding race as well as to be able to express themselves in a safe, secure environment. What is most memorable about this convention is that we actually held it in Denver. At the time, the Denver Legislature had passed an amendment essentially discriminating against gays and lesbians. We didn’t want to be viewed as condoning any such legislation or put any of our members at risk. We considered changing the venue, but wiser minds prevailed, and the convention took place in Denver.

One other memorable moment for me that I really want to be sure and share is the camaraderie and friendship we always had at our national convention(s). (I like to call them gatherings). I’ll never forget the opportunities I had to be in the company of such good colleagues and friends. After working hard all year at our respective colleges and universities, being able to pick up the phone and share a problem or better still seek advice and counsel any day of the week was much appreciated. Most gratifying though was to spend time together face to face during our convention whether to share a meal, go for a walk, dance the night away or just spend some
quality time together honoring ourselves for our successes and/or our challenges. It’s why I chose these words for the opening session of my convention year—“Relax, Relate, Release!”

Lan Hewlett: Harold White (U of South Carolina)

Distinguished Service: Jack Rivas (UC Santa Barbara)


President: Dr. Karl Mooney (Texas A&M U.)

Although Susan Gibbs had researched downtown hotels, N4A ended up in Oak Brook, IL. The World Cup had booked the downtown hotels.

(Information provided by Dr. Karl Mooney)

“I had the honor of serving the N4A as its President in 1994. The support from the membership and from the athletic administration and staff of Texas A&M for me and my fellow officers was always evident. For several years, Texas A&M provided office space and related resources for our National Office.”

Our keynote speaker was Dr. George Kuh, renowned in his leadership field for teaching. Other featured speakers included the following: Dr. Steve Aloia provided an exhilarating session that helped guide us through the beginning of an academic year; Hal Caldwell, father of the ACADV Network, an electronic mail network designed for academic advisors, explained this service; Cedric Dempsey (NCAA Executive Director), a special individual, had the ability to promote the positive aspects of intercollegiate athletics and the myriad of relationships to which it must be ethically bound.

Lan Hewlett: Fred Mims (U. of Iowa)

Distinguished Service: Don Ferrell (Penn State U.)

1995, ORLANDO, FL: “Unity through Diversity”

President: Dr. Tom Hill (U. of Florida)

(Information provided by Dr. Tom Hill)

“The major issues facing the organization during my presidency involved all of the following: stabilizing the national office; increasing membership; creating a national vita bank; increasing convention registration, creating a fundraising position for N4A; and improving the communication lines within the organization.
Since the last convention, The Executive Board had worked hard to ensure that our financial base was solid. Some measures include increasing our overall fee structure, relocating the National Office to Susan Gibbs’ home, and soliciting additional cost containment ideas from the membership.”

A predicted $30K budget shortfall necessitated some changes. Waving convention and membership fees for past presidents and award winners was discontinued. Also, the N4A News publication was reduced from four to two times a year.

Dr. Prentice Gautt, Big Eight Conference Associate Commissioner, was the keynote speaker.

**Lan Hewlett:** Shirley Becker (DePaul U.)

**Distinguished Service:** Evans Roderick (Mt. San Antonio Community College)

**1996, CRYSTAL CITY, VA: “To Your Health”**

President: **Elizabeth “Buzz” Kurpius** (Indiana U.)

*Buzz offers a different perspective on N4A’s convention history. She was one of three women present at the NCAA Convention in 1975 and had seen so many changes.*

*(Information provided by Buzz Kurpius)*

“The concern I had for our membership was burnout because of the pressure for student athletes to be eligible. Pressure from society for students to graduate from meaningful majors also added to this stress. At-risk student athletes were lured to college with the promise of the professional dollars. The year I was N4A President, we tried to address the health and wellness of academic advisors. If we as advisors are not emotionally healthy and balanced, it will be difficult to address the welfare of our student athletes and have continuity in our organization.”

Keynote speaker was Dr. John Seffrin, Chief Executive Officer of the American Cancer Society.

Before her untimely death, Shirley Becker recommended speaker joan olsson, who dedicated her workshop “Racism, Sexism, Heterosexism…” to Shirley. Additional speakers were Charles Farrell, National Director of the Rainbow Commission for Fairness in Athletics, Carolyn Cornelison, and Dr. Kris Clark, sport nutritionist.

Susan Gibbs had made the decision to become a full-time mother and recommended Kathi Ley as the new Convention Coordinator and National Office Director. Kathi’s hiring was approved by the Executive Board.

**Lan Hewlett:** Steve Milburn (U. of Louisville)

**Distinguished Service:** Sandy Meyer (Penn State U.)

President: Fred Stroock (U. of Southern California)

(Information provided by Fred Stroock)

“As N4A President, I dedicated myself to producing a significant increase in membership, to raising attendance at the national meeting in Phoenix to its highest level ever, and to gaining additional representation within the NCAA committee structure. And I’m pleased to say each of these goals was successfully accomplished.” His “challenge” referred to the challenges within the profession as well as externally to ensure we enjoyed our lives with family and friends outside our jobs.

Fred joined others in taking on the NCAA, various athletic conferences, the President’s Commission, and the Knight Commission. Some efforts succeeded, and others did not.

[More information to follow in History of the N4A]

Fred’s keynote speaker was Brian O’Malley. He was chosen as a motivational speaker to help inspire those in N4A to tackle personal and professional challenges and reach their own summits. Brian is a very well-known adventurer and photographer whose multi-media presentation was designed to "inspire audiences to better handle the everyday challenges and adventures of life, and to recognize the importance of living life to its fullest."

(Information provided by Sandy Meyer)

Given this meeting was at a desert resort, keeping attendees in sessions and away from the myriad of pools was, at times, challenging. The annual golf outing presented other hazards. If the ball didn’t stay in the fairway, you might encounter snakes and wild pigs in the rough. The temperature was so high, in the low 100’s, we had to move the welcome reception to a shady terrace.

Lan Hewlett: Dr. Kate Riffee (Ohio State U.)

Distinguished Service: Nancy Parker (U. of Iowa)

1998, AUSTIN, TX: “Renaissance”

President: Dr. Ron Brown (U. of Pittsburgh)

(Information provided by Dr. Ron Brown)

“The major issues facing academic/athletic advising during my presidency were the following:

1. Integration of the N4A as a viable, no less, critical function of NCAA member institution program offerings.
2. The need for inclusion of N4A members on NCAA Div. I Certification Peer Review teams to ensure adequate emphasis in student-athlete welfare initiatives on campuses.

3. Two-year college articulation of credits for transfer and degree progress.

4. Alignment of academic support services in the organizational structure of institutions. Athletics vs. Academic Affairs.

5. The need for financial support of academic support services for athletes from NCAA revenues.

Cedric Dempsey, NCAA President, was the keynote speaker. He was selected because we needed to assert the N4A agenda among the highest levels of college sports’ discussion. We no longer wanted athletics’ administration to be the sole representative of our interests, voice, and role in college athletics. This move was critical to our effort.

My fondest memory of the convention over which I presided was the vision of so many passionate, new members joining the organization and attending the convention in Austin. Additionally, our student-athlete award winners’ attendance was special.”

Lan Hewlett:  Kevin Lyons (Boston College)

Distinguished Service:  Ann Hughes (U. of Florida)

1999, CINCINNATI, OH: “Choices”

President:  Jill DeMichele (Arizona State U.)

(Information provided by Jill DeMichele)

Jill chose “Choices” as her convention’s theme because “the direction we take results from the choices we make.” During Jill’s involvement as President-Elect, President, and Past President, N4A launched the first-ever fundraising campaign for the 25th N4A Convention. ($14,000 was raised.) Creation of an N4A Web page and url developed and managed by ASU were introduced. She instituted the Past Presidents’ Luncheon “to keep communication open between N4A’s former and current leadership.”

At the 1999 Convention, the “Memorial Moment” was introduced to remember and honor our colleagues, student athletes, administrators, and coaches who had passed away the previous year. In addition, Region V initiated the “Professional Promise Award” given to N4A members who had been members fewer than five years and had contributed significantly to the profession and N4A.

“We added the Two-Year College Committee Chair as a voting member of the Executive Board. At that time Committees were called Commissions, and I’m not sure when the title changed.”
The keynote speaker was Dr. Richard Lapchick, and the Awards Luncheon speaker was Cedric Dempsey.

“The 1999 Convention reinforced for me that our N4A members were deeply committed to learning best practices for advising student athletes and collaborating on advancing our profession.”

**Lan Hewlett:** Dr. Joe Luckey (Austin Peay U.)

**Distinguished Service:** Trudy Lakin (Wichita State U.)

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**2000, BATON ROUGE, LA: “Rejoice, Reflect, Renew”**

President: **Jack Rivas** (UCSB)

*(Information provided by Jack Rivas)*

*Before Jack became N4A President, he was the longest serving N4A Treasurer. Previously mentioned Richard Esquinas neglected to pay N4A’s taxes. As Jack likes to say, “I kept N4A out of jail.”*

Jack’s vision for N4A was simply stated: “It’s time for us to grow up.” It was our 25th year, and we still had some rather “mom and pop” qualities in the way we conducted our business. “We needed to advance from our youth and become young adults. It was time to begin rethinking who we were and how we functioned as well as creating a long-term plan.”

The featured speaker was Dr. Christine Grant, Associate Professor, Department of Health, Leisure and Physical Studies and Women’s Athletic Director at U. of Iowa.

Academic scandals, specifically the one at the U. of Minnesota, had made national headlines. John Blanchard, one of our own, helped guide Minnesota through the aftermath of one of the largest academic fraud scandals in history. His presentation, “Lessons Learned,” provided insightful information about how to restore integrity after a scandal.

In 2000, Regions II and III gave out their regional “Professional Promise Awards.”

“One of my proudest accomplishments was creating the LGBT and Life Skills Committees.”

**Note:** Jack was the first “one-man-show” rather than a program director to be elected N4A President.

**Lan Hewlett:** Phyllis LaBaw (U. of South Florida)

**Distinguished Service:** Barb Deniston (U. of Kentucky)
2001, PROVIDENCE, RI: “Charting Our Course to the Future”

President: Dr. Carol Gruber (U. of Minnesota)

(Information provided by Dr. Carol Gruber)

“After serving as chair of the Long Range Planning Committee for several years, I believed it was time for the Association to put together an official strategic planning document that would guide us for the next five years. In 2001, I left Iowa and went to Minnesota and was entrenched in the aftermath of the academic fraud scandal. Because of what happened at Minnesota, many university presidents were carefully looking at the reporting lines of academic support programs for student athletes. Should they continue to be housed in the Athletics Department, as many were, or should they be independently housed within the Provost’s Office? Another consideration was dual reporting.”

In 2001, Regions I and IV gave out their “Professional Promise Awards.” Since 2000, all five regions have annually given the awards.

Most memorable about Carol’s convention was “charging a task force that would convene for one full year to prepare and present N4A’s first ever strategic plan.”

Distinguished Service: Harold White (U. of South Carolina)

2002, RENO, NV: “Stepping Out of the Box”

President: Curt Fludd (U. of Texas-Austin)

(Information provided by Curt Fludd)

“The big issues during my presidency were NCAA recognition, securing corporate sponsorships, financial stability, and Web site redesign to facilitate communication with the membership.”

The keynote speaker was Dr. Clarence Underwood, N4A Co-founder. In addition, featured presenters included Dr. Murray Sperber, Reverend Jerome Barber, and Carla Gary, J.D.

Most memorable was that Gene Washington, former NFL and Stanford receiver, announced the NFL’s commitment to sponsor the Wilma Rudolph Award.

Lan Hewlett: Dennis LeBlanc (U. of Nebraska)

Distinguished Service: Mike Jenkins (U. Mass-Amherst)
2003, ST. LOUIS, MO: “Hearts of Champions”

President: Phil Moses  (North Carolina State U.)

(Information provided by Phil Moses)

“Heading into my presidency, two catch phrases come to mind: fiscal stability and partnership development. N4A had established a strong hold on its finances partly due to the Finance Committee assuming a necessary and active role in all significant financial situations. The time was also right to begin networking with our former colleagues who had moved out of advising and into other athletic areas.”

Partnerships were established with the NFL thanks to Jon Harris, while those with the NBA were attributed to Dr. Janice Hilliard and Kevin Carr. The time was also right to knock on the NCAA’s door. Dr. Myles Brand, NCAA President, “was very early in his tenure and was taking every opportunity to meet with the ‘key constituents’ involved in student-athlete lives. He kindly accepted our invitation to speak. He understood the pressures we faced and would voice his support and concern for N4A with university presidents. Finally, the door was opened, and we were walking in as equals. Not only was the door open for our opinions, but the NCAA sought our insights and expertise. Presidents Marlowe, McDonnell, and Meyer continued nurturing the NCAA partnership.

On a sad note, one of our members lost his life at the St. Louis Convention. Matt Schmauch (Florida State U.) collapsed and later passed away from an allergic food reaction.”

Lan Hewlett: Anitra House (Indiana U.)

Distinguished Service: Dr. Ferna Phillips Osgood (Boston College)

2004, INDIANAPOLIS, IN: “Cultivating Leadership and Building Bridges”

President: Demetrius Marlowe  (Michigan State U.)

(Information provided by Demetrius Marlowe)

The biggest issue during Demetrius’ presidency concerned the NCAA’s implementation of the APR and GSR. He believed N4A had to continue its NCAA partnerships that would yield to improving services to student athletes.

Lan Hewlett: Dr. Ron Brown (U. of Pittsburgh)

Distinguished Service: Dr. Carol Gruber (U. of Minnesota)
2005, RALEIGH, NC: “Creating a Balance”

President:  Steve McDonnell (Texas A&M U.)

(Information provided by Steve McDonnell)

“My presidential year is best described as transitional for N4A. In 2003, the NCAA had completed a year of major academic reform by passing legislation to stiffen initial eligibility requirements. One result was an increase in academic support personnel, especially in D-1. N4A’s membership and its budget would eventually double compared to what they were in 2004.

Two major events which greatly impacted N4A occurred during my tenure. About two weeks prior to the 2004 national meeting in Indianapolis, N4A’s Executive Director, resigned to accept a more lucrative position. The N4A National Office was in her home in Louisville. We needed to establish a new National Office immediately. I approached my supervisor at Texas A&M requesting we temporarily house the office in our academic center until we could find a permanent site. The National Office was in our academic center from 2004 – 2006.

We approached NACDA about becoming one of its affiliate organizations, but the time wasn’t right. Plus, many N4A members thought by joining NACDA, we would lose our identity. We solicited proposals for a permanent national office, and North Carolina State University became the new site in 2006.

Another major event grew out of N4A’s inevitable maturity as a professional organization. A three-day retreat facilitated by Tom Miller at South Florida U. resulted in a new and more professional organizational structure which was approved by the membership in Raleigh. N4A’s current governing structure is a result of this process.

I’m most proud of the fact that during my presidential tenure, the N4A Professional Development Institute (PDI) was established. Kim Durand and Demetrius Marlowe were the two key players in establishing the institute. With the help of a capable faculty, PDI has flourished for ten years. The Past Presidents’ Advisory Committee, which still exists today, began during my presidency.”

Lan Hewlett:  Phil Hughes (Kansas State U.)

Distinguished Service:  Jackie Newton (UNLV)
2006, PITTSBURGH, PA: “Back to the Future”

President: Sandy Meyer  (Penn State U.)

In 1992 in Anaheim, Dr. Ferna Phillips asked me to be the Convention Program Chair for her meeting the following year in Denver. I held that position until 2004 when Kathi Ley, N4A Executive Director and Convention Planner, resigned. Since I’d worked closely with Kathi for eight years, I became the Convention Coordinator until a new National Office and Executive Director could be found. So, in addition to my presidential duties in 2006, I also had to be sure the convention ran smoothly, the expenses were accurately calculated, meals were as ordered, speakers were paid, etc.

During my presidency, Dr. Eric White from Penn State was NACADA’s President, and Penn State’s AD, Tim Curley, was NACDA President. Eric and I solidified an arrangement so NACADA and N4A would have a reciprocal agreement with regard to attending each other’s national meetings. Each Association would have free exhibit space at each other’s conferences and receive two complimentary registrations. We submitted a proposal to have a round table discussion at NACDA’s national meeting, but the idea was turned down. The NACADA/N4A Partnership has continued.

The most important issue during my presidency was gaining our members’ confidence in our new organizational structure as well as hiring an Executive Director. Since Kerry Howland, President-Elect, would be the person dealing with the new National Office and its director, I yielded to her and her committee’s recommendations.

As N4A President, I had the opportunity to present N4A’s position on proposed resolutions at the NCAA National Convention in Dallas. With Steve McDonnell’s support, I actually went to the microphone and stated N4A’s position. (I wish I could remember what the issue was.) In addition, I was invited to speak to the NCAA Committee on Academic Performance (CAP) in Newport Beach, CA, and at the Center for Study of Sport in Society (CSSS) in Orlando.

Our keynote speaker was Chris Connelly, an ESPN reporter and host of “Outside the Lines.” His presentation provided some much needed levity and humor as our meetings began.

Most memorable about the Pittsburgh convention was my double duty as President and Convention Planner. As always, my N4A colleagues’ support and encouragement helped make our convention one of the best. As Dr. Don Sheffield reiterated in his inspiring presentation, “It Takes a Village.”

Lan Hewlett:  Dr. Gerald Gurney  (U. of Oklahoma)

Distinguished Service: Phil Moses (North Carolina State U.)
2007, PHOENIX, AZ: “The Future is Now”

President: Kerry Howland (U. of Tennessee-Knoxville)

(Information provided by Kerry Howland)

“During my presidency, academic/athletic advisors were still learning to negotiate APR and PTD. Some critics claimed the APR prompted academic corner-cutting if not outright fraud. Penalties loomed for schools failing to meet the NCAA’s new academic standards.

At our midyear meeting, we began a fruitful discussion of the NCAA/N4A Partnership proposal. N4A would become a resource for providing information to non-athletic/academic advisors on campuses; the partnership was exclusively between NACADA and the NCAA.

Because of the stress involved with our jobs, we discussed how our members’ health and welfare would benefit from more of such programming at national as well as regional meetings. The NCAA academic reforms had exacerbated our stress.”

The keynote speaker, Rene Rochester, CEO Urban Set/Phat Star Learning, inspired us with her presentation “Making the Most of Now!” Dr. Angela Taylor and Jean Conway also contributed input concerning our health and welfare.

Most memorable was once again “connecting” with my colleagues from across the country. Together, we had the opportunity to be enlightened, rejuvenated, and encouraged.”

Lan Hewlett: Barb Deniston (U. of Kentucky)

Distinguished Service: Shawna Bowyer (Penn State U.)

Steve McDonnell (Texas A&M U.)

2008, KANSAS CITY, MO: “Competency and Performance”

President: Phil Hughes (Kansas State U.)

(Information provided by Phil Hughes)

N4A’s transition and adaptation to its new organizational format and the formally established National Office at North Carolina State was at the forefront of issues during my presidency. “Our new administrative model necessitated significant changes in N4A governance, budgeting priorities, and the various roles of Executive Board members. The Association had identified goals to increase membership, stabilize services to the membership, and develop additional revenue sources.

In 2006, NACADA and the NCAA formed a partnership to support education for academic/athletic advisors. According to the NCAA, NACADA had the infrastructure to
facilitate an online course, and N4A did not. “I felt such training initiatives should be executed by N4A professionals. In my assessment, it became imperative N4A quickly develop and offer its own educational opportunities and professional development sessions. We continued our partnership with the NCAA focusing on initiatives which could impact N4A members and their programs.”

“The keynote speaker was Dr. Walt Harrison, President of the University of Hartford. At the time, Dr. Harrison had been the longstanding chair of the NCAA Committee on Academic Performance (CAP). This group was instrumental in formulating the APR and PTD legislation.”

Lan Hewlett: Betsi Burns (Northwestern U.)

Distinguished Service: Karen Schiferel (U. of Mississippi)

2009, MIAMI BEACH, FL: “Sun, Sand and Solidarity”

President: Mark Melene (Florida State U.)

(Information provided by Mark Melene)

“During my presidency, Athletic Academic Support Programs were heavily involved in the analysis of early APR and PTD data. With specific program and/or sport penalties clearly on the horizon, institutions were evaluating resources to ensure they had the necessary infrastructures in place to facilitate the academic success of their student athletes.

It was also this year that the N4A established the “N4A Institutional Certification and Individual Certification Programs.” The goal of Program Certification was to certify that an academic support unit can provide a basic set of services to student athletes, as outlined in N4A guidelines. Individual certifications were also developed for Learning Specialist and Academic Advisor positions.

With the National Office move to North Carolina State University, we embarked on the hire of a fulltime Executive Director. Our relationship with the NCAA continued to strengthen, and we were in early discussions with NACDA on how we might form some collaboration.

My keynote speaker was Dr. Kenneth Fowler, CEO of Systemic Effects. Dr. Fowler is a certified Mental Health Counselor and Professor at Florida State University. With the continued stress of this profession, I choose Dr. Fowler for his positive message about life. My goal was that we gained a more balanced perspective before we returned to campus.

As many of you know, I was addressing a number of professional challenges during my presidency. What is most memorable to me about this convention and my years of involvement with the N4A is the relationships I developed over the years and the overwhelming support from my peers during this time.”
2010, SALT LAKE CITY, UT: “Soaring to New Heights”

President: Christine Jackson (U. of Louisville)

(Information provided by Christine Jackson)

“Some of the issues facing our profession during my presidency were major clustering, the additional demands/pressure placed on academic support units because of the increased numbers of underprepared student athletes, and developing new ways to increase N4A’s membership numbers and services especially due to many schools having budget constraints.

Charlotte F. Westerhaus, at the time of the convention, was the NCAA’s Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion. She was selected because of her passion in working with the membership on developing and implementing effective polices and programming to promote diversity and inclusion in college athletics.

We celebrated the N4A’s 35th Anniversary in Salt Lake City. I had the honor of being the first President that was a graduate of the N4A Professional Development Institute (PDI). What made this convention memorable for me was the unwavering support I received from everyone to ensure the convention was a success. The visit from the fire department and the cold weather also made this convention unique to say the least.”

Lan Hewlett: Sandy Meyer (Penn State U.)

Distinguished Service: Kerry Howland (U. of Tennessee-Knoxville)

(Information provided by Sandy Meyer)

In one of the hotel rooms, an attendee hung a clothes hanger on the fire alarm device. Bells began ringing, and water from the hotel sprinkler system flooded the hallway, adjacent rooms, and seeped through the floor to the rooms below. Firefighters arrived in the wee hours of the morning, in full firefighting gear, although there really hadn’t been a fire.
THE MATURE YEARS

2011, DALLAS, TX: “The Heat is On!”

President: Dr. Gerry Gurney (U. of Oklahoma)

(Information provided by Dr. Gerry Gurney)

“The major issue during my presidency dealt with the effect of the NCAA’s initial eligibility requirements on the profession’s ability to remediate marginal and underprepared athletes.”

Mark Emmert, NCAA President was the keynote speaker. Another featured speaker was Gerald Turner, SMU President and Knight Commission Co-Chair.

“The Dallas convention enjoyed about 600 attendees, half of our membership. The groundwork was also laid to become a NACDA affiliate program and transfer administrative offices from North Carolina State University to NACDA headquarters in Cleveland. The move positioned the N4A toward solid fiscal health.”

Lan Hewlett: Kim Durand (U. of Washington)

Distinguished Service: Joan Hopkins (U Mass-Amherst)


President: Dr. Joe Luckey (U. of Memphis)

(Information provided by Dr. Joe Luckey)

“I had spent my President-Elect year watching, learning, and assisting Dr. Gurney’s leadership in negotiating the change in our National Office under NACDA’s management. Given the change occurring, I thought in 2011-12 we needed to focus on all aspects of the transition—the business logistics of making the change from our National Office at NC State to preparing for the last two
N4A conventions before we joined the overall 2014 NACDA Convention. Finally, I wanted to initiate conversations amongst the N4A leaders and members as to the true direction we wanted our organization to go.

The convention theme revolved around our past, present, and future. So, I selected speakers to represent each of the three. Todd Stansbury represented the past. Tom Thomas was for the present—our mental health and professional development. Bob Vecchione was for the future since we were about to embark on a partnership with NACDA.”

Over 500 attended the convention in a state which had never before hosted the N4A. Dan Brinkman also planned a great trip for attendees to visit Niagra Falls.

Lan Hewlett: Jean Boyd (Arizona State U.)

Distinguished Service: Walt Holliday (Louisiana State U.)

2013, JACKSONVILLE, FL: “Years in the Making”

President: Bart Byrd (Baylor U.)

(Information provided by Bart Bird)

As an organization, N4A decided to join NACDA for our professional growth. “One of the major issues facing our profession was the growth of academic dishonesty cases and the pressures facing us to maintain eligibility in the high stakes’ business of big time sports.”

Bart selected Jay Williams as his keynote speaker. Jay was chosen due to his speaking ability about college basketball and how fast an athletic career can end.

Most memorable for Bart was that this was the last convention before joining NACDA’s convention sites. “We had one of the largest turnouts in N4A’s history.”

Lan Hewlett: Roger Grooters (posthumously) (Florida State U.)

Distinguished Service: Dan Brinkman (Furman U.)

2014, ORLANDO, FL: “Our Opportunity”

President: Jim Pignataro (Michigan State U.)

(Information provided by Jim Pignataro)

The major issues during Jim’s presidency centered around academic misconduct, NCAA metrics on student-athlete success, and “industry” managing APR vs. student-athlete success.

Jim chose Myron Rolle, FSU and Rhodes Scholar as his keynote speaker. “I wanted a former student athlete and someone who was impressive. His life story fit our convention theme, and he
is an immigrant and someone who took full advantage of an opportunity. I also wanted a respected female from the college athletics’ industry. Patty Phillips, Executive Director of NACWAA, spoke of how opportunity and life balance fit into the professional development category.”

Jim relates what was most memorable about his convention was it was N4A’s first under NACDA.

Lan Hewlett: Curtis Jones (posthumously) (West Virginia U.)

Distinguished Service: Carla Winters (U. of Oklahoma)

2015, ORLANDO, FL: “Strength from our Past, Promise for our Future”

President: Kim Durand (U. of Washington)

(Information provided by Kim Durand)

Major issues – Major academic scandals around academic integrity and reorganization of the NCAA with Division I autonomy, conference restructuring, and deregulation of key student-athlete welfare initiatives including unlimited meals and cost of attendance. Pending are legal cases with regard to student-athlete likenesses, possible unionization, and post-eligibility trust funds and anti-trust protections.

Keynote speaker is Dr. Brian Hainline, Chief Medical Officer from the NCAA. “I chose him because our profession has shifted from being solely academic professionals to student-athlete development professionals. We run Life Skills programs, deal with student-athlete mental health issues, career development and life after sport. Dr. Hainline is at the forefront of two key areas of student-athlete welfare – mental health issues and concussion management and speaks to both of the two major factors impacting today’s student-athletes.”

Lan Hewlett: Ursula Gurney (U. of Missouri Kansas City)

Distinguished Service: Ted White (U. of Georgia)

2016, DALLAS, TX: “Embracing the Evolution”

President: Jean Boyd (Arizona State U.)

Lan Hewlett: Jim Pignataro (Michigan State U.); Henry Villegas (San Diego State U.)

Distinguished Service: Joe Luckey (U. of Cincinnati)
2017, ORLANDO, FL: “Unity in Action – One Goal, One Mission, One Vision”

President: Kenneth Miles (Louisiana State U.)

Lan Hewlett: David Graham (Ohio State U.)

Distinguished Service: Denise Poole (New York U.)

2017 AND BEYOND…

The West African “san kofa” legend is known among the Twi-speaking people of Ghana. Its image is based on that of a bird turning its head to straighten its tail feathers. And so the proverb goes that for the bird to fly, it must tend to all its feathers, including its tail. According to the lesson of the “san kofa,” we are all a product of our past. The past must be cared for if we are to “fly” to the future.