

Continued Professional Growth and My Plan to Get There

By: Robby Smith

As my professional career continues in intercollegiate athletics, I will most certainly need to continue my growth as a lifelong learner. I will need to learn more about my student-athletes, more about technology, and more about my profession. The face of intercollegiate athletics is constantly evolving and as it continues to evolve so will the student-athletes, technology, and professionals that work within college athletics. Student-athletes are starting to have and will have more of a voice on how college athletics is organized. The new era of college athletics will need to listen and learn from the new generation of student-athletes and administrators. While these changes are being made in this new era of college athletics, I will need to continue to grow as a lifelong learner. For me to continue to grow, there are some things I can do to facilitate my growth through student-athletes, technology, and professional development.

New Era of Student-Athletes

The structure of college athletics is changing by giving student-athletes more of a voice on how college athletics is organized, operated, and managed. In order for me to grow within college athletics, I will also need to change and continue to understand the new era of student-athlete. It is extremely important for me to stay connect with the current student-athletes, so I can evaluate what they need to help put them in the best situation to be successful. Much like a teacher would evaluate their students, the same can be said for athletic department administrators. Often times the perceptions of what student-athletes need, can be hindered because the lack of understanding and connection that an administrator has with the student-athletes. Being able to listen, understand and communicate with a student about how they feel or what they want can make the biggest difference in helping a student-athlete be successful.

There are many opportunities for me to engage with student-athletes, one of which is through the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC). Every college or university with an athletic department has a SAAC organization. SAAC allows current student-athletes to weigh in on decisions that are happening on campus and across the national landscape. Communicating with these student-athletes on the SAAC committee will be crucial in helping me understanding what these student-athletes need or want from the athletic department. SAAC is also big at the national level, as the NCAA also listens to the voice of the student-athlete. Understanding the new era of student-athlete will allow me to continue to grow and be successful within in intercollegiate athletics.

Keeping Up With Technology

As the student-athlete changes, so will the advancements in technology. Technology has already had a significant role within the classroom as it has in college athletics. As new and improved technology is available for our coaches and student-athletes, I also need to keep up with the advancements in technology to help facilitate learning and comprehending information within our sports programs. Being able to understand apps like coacheseye, scoutware, and Xosdigital will allow me to facilitate knowledge to our coaches and student-athletes. It will be challenging for me to continue to grow in technology

since it is consistently changing. But for me to know that new and different technology is available, will help me from becoming sedentary with the current technology we have. As a department staff, we usually meet two to three times a semester to talk about new technology, what do our coaches need, and how we can help facilitate the use of new technology to help grow their program and student-athletes.

Professional Development

Lastly, it is important for me to grow as a professional. I will need to continue to communicate with my mentors and have a sense of what is happening within intercollegiate athletics. A couple of ways to stay connected with other professionals in my career are by attending professional development functions. Michigan State University offers different professional development opportunities; the athletic department also offers athletic specific professional development functions. Outside of the athletic department the NCAA and different athletic organizations also offer professional development. The National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA) has valuable information and great professional development courses. NACDA also has a yearly convention where members can go listen to guest speakers on many different subjects and also allows you to network with other professionals. There are also conventions held within each sport, so if I am looking to become more knowledgeable in the game of softball than I could attend the softball convention. Overall, there are many opportunities and areas for me to grow as a professional. It is now up to me to use these resources and continue my growth as a lifelong learner.