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Flow & Function – The Importance of Athlete-Centric Design

Recent “buzz” around design of athletics venues has included phrases such as fan experience, brand immersion, revenue generation and return on investment. All of these are worthy of consideration. A “wow factor” aesthetic is also important, but don’t forget to make sure the flow and function of your facility is “athlete-centric.”

In the high-stakes world of athletics facility design, focusing on simplicity of operations is key for project success. Bells and whistles are important, but ease of use and proper flow is critical for athletes to train and compete at the highest level. Compressed schedules coupled with maximizing practice and meeting times for student-athletes demands efficient layout in athletics facility design.

Are the entry points into the facility visible and intuitive? Are there key circulation elements that

efficiently connect the various preparation, meeting, recovery, and lounge spaces? Is there a visual connection between the main spaces to enhance a sense of “team”

and “community” between all the users? Are back of house areas separate from the daily athlete use, yet designed to easily service the areas used by the athletes? Is there a creative way to enhance existing equity in renovation projects? All of these are key questions and issues to be considered in the design process.

The Woody Hayes Athletic Center for Ohio State

athletics is constantly improving to remain an elite Power 5 football training center. OSU partnered with MSA Sport on the redesign of the East Wing of the WHAC to enhance the functionality of the building by including: an expanded dining area, food-preparation kitchen, athlete lounge overlooking the indoor field, recovery area, indoor drill simulator, arcade, barbershop, film room, and indoor practice court. All amenities are tied back into existing circulation through a new monumental stair and corridor which improves athlete circulation and flow to the indoor practice field, lockers and weight training areas.

The Heidt Champions Center at Xavier University

converts a 1970’s recreation center into a home for Xavier’s Olympic sports teams. The flow and function of the building has been reorganized through a new central stair and elevator, locker room reconstruction, and converting the gym into a

multi-level training zone including weight training, batting tunnels and an indoor synthetic turf field. These teams now have dedicated locker and training space.

The FC Cincinnati Mercy Health Training Center,

hailed as the “best soccer training facility in North America,” is organized around parallel public and private corridors to keep the flow and function of building services separate from the players. The player areas are organized along the daily flow of activity: the player entry is adjacent to the dining room/lounge, which connects to the locker room, boot room, rehab and sports performance areas. The public corridor strategically connects to player areas for servicing, while not distracting from the visual focus of the player areas - views overlooking the training pitches placed to remind athletes of their purpose - to win for their club and city.

Vertical connections, intuitive corridor layout, athlete recovery spaces, socialization areas, and proper operations support are critical in athlete-centric design. Make sure you build the foundation of your projects around the athletes – you will be assured of success!



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CoSIDA Diversity and Inclusion Committee on Path to Make Impactful Change

Greetings from the CoSIDA Diversity and Inclusion committee! This committee was started with the hopes of diversifying the communications field and to help ensure that all members felt as if they were seen and supported.

As CoSIDA 3rd Vice President and chair of the committee, to see the strides this group has taken to help foster change not only among our membership but throughout the intercollegiate athletics landscape is remarkable. This group has worked tirelessly to provide resources, bring awareness and foster conversations around diversity and inclusion topics.

CoSIDA’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee has spearheaded collaborations with other affiliate groups at the annual NACDA and CoSIDA Conventions and last year, joined with our marketing colleagues from NACMA to host

a very insightful and thought-provoking fireside chat featuring Dr. Katrice Albert, NCAA Executive Vice President of Inclusion and Human Resources.

Additionally, CoSIDA has increased its collaboration with the NCAA’s Office of Inclusion and most recently participated in Common Ground, hosted by the University of Texas in November. I was fortunate enough to serve as CoSIDA’s representative and I can tell you it was a truly life-changing experience.

Common Ground is a think tank that was started in 2014 to bring together members of the LGBTQA+ community and members of faith-based institutions to talk about the differences of belief between the communities and to explore how to bridge gaps and work towards reaching common ground.

As a person of faith and an ally, I was intrigued to spend several days with people who could help me see more clearly the issues and challenges from both sides. Common Ground created a safe space for a diverse group of people in athletics to come together to have tough and profound conversations surrounding our differences. It was a space to cultivate relationships with people who may be different than me and a space which also forced me to challenge the lens through which I look at the world.

Our committee has really opened the door for some very real and very frank conversations regarding topics of diversity and inclusion not only facing communications professionals but on issues facing the entire world; it continues to be at the forefront of finding ways to impact change.

This academic year, the committee will help foster conversations around ADA compliance and accessibility through an April webinar. We also will host more in-depth panels at the CoSIDA Convention and will also collaborate with NACMA and N4A for discussions on LGBTQ+ issues in intercollegiate athletics.

It is often said that the athletics communications field is made up of primarily white men but my friends, that is changing. We have SIDs who identify as women, people of color, LGBTQ+ and they are all making an impact on student-athlete lives. It is the goal of this committee to make sure that everyone feels respected, comfortable and supported no matter how they identify.