

I-AAA ADA



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I want to open by expressing what an honor it is to serve as the Division I-AAA Athletics Directors Association President for the 2019-20 academic year. We have a tremendous group of Officers this year and are enjoying another year of collegueship and peer mentoring while looking forward to multiple sessions together at the NACDA Convention in June in Las Vegas.

When asked to write this column on the topic of facilities, one word immediately came to mind: collaboration. In the hustle and bustle of meetings with general contractors, architects, regents/trustees, and finance officers, it is easy to have tunnel vision and unintentionally close ranks while obsessing about finishing the project on time and on budget.

I came to a realization in a planning meeting for our Joe Etzel Field baseball renovation project one

afternoon. We had all the right people in the room to discuss the developed goals that will carry physical construction of the facility with one glaring exception; a representative from each division that would run the building day in and day out after construction was complete.

Do we, as athletics directors, know the concerns our game operations managers will have with a new facility, down to the last detail? Field maintenance personnel? Sports information? Video production team? It seems daunting at the time to capture so much feedback, hear criticism of your facility vision, and/or incur a dreaded change order or two. But it is far better than opening a facility with a significant flaw(s) or figuring out how to pay for something that could have easily been remedied earlier in the process.

A few things to think about as you consider whom to involve during the process:

- Set parameters as needed with all parties. Let them know the answer won't be a "yes" (or "no") to every comment/suggestion/concern. Be clear on which areas you want them to focus and where you need their feedback the most.
- It is not practical, or possible, to have a representative from every division present during each and every planning and/or construction

meeting. It is important to work with each area to determine the point(s) in the process that is most critical to have them involved. This can be done by setting a standing schedule (i.e. first meeting of the month) or creating a rotation that ensures the right voices will be around the table each meeting.

- Make sure that the agendas/minutes for every meeting are distributed to the entire group (whether or not they will attend every meeting or not). This ensures everyone stays up-to-date with the latest discussions/schedules.
- The inclusion of additional staff/campus constituents not only helps the end result, but also is a great professional development opportunity for all involved.

Again, all of the above points may seem basic, but are easy to overlook in the day-to-day department grind.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the NACDA Convention in June!

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- Jonathan Haarlow, COO, Lamar University

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