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Storytelling is an art form that includes everything from long-form features, short snappy profiles, clever graphics, video sound bites and plenty of social media sharing.

Within intercollegiate athletics, stories share a journey that students, fans, alumni and donors can identify with and provide a way to personally connect them with a student-athlete, a team or the institution's brand. Today's consumers want more than on-field dramatics; they want to understand, to know, and to empathize with the athletes they follow especially if it's authentic and shows human vulnerabilities.

As we begin a new decade, there's an intentional and strategic shift toward engaging storytelling. With so many things competing for our attention, sharing impactful stories is more important than ever.

Powerful stories should:

- Trigger an emotional response from the consumer.
- Communicate what the subject values.

- Show what the subject stands for.
- Engage, entertain and educate.

Here's four critical questions that need to be answered before a story is started:

- Why are we telling this story?
- Who is the audience?
- What is the best way to connect with that audience? Maybe there's an opportunity to share the story in different ways across multiple platforms.
- How does this story fit into the department's overarching strategy to promote and advocate for student-athletes?

Storytelling isn't the sole responsibility of the strategic communications department. Everybody in the athletics department should be involved because, ultimately, the entire athletics department is impacted by the stories that are shared. The art of storytelling is important for all messaging across the department.

It takes some time to develop these strategies. Strong stories that resonate and good narratives cross over all forms of marketing/communications (digital, podcasts, ads, social media, website posts, etc.). In today's landscape, it should be a collaboration

of many department members to tell that good story. Being clear about your strategic goals will help you identify which of your stories most need telling.

Recently, CoSIDA partnered with Blinder to enhance its storytelling and celebration of the Academic All-Americans® of the Year. In addition to a written release and social media graphics, there's now a video component that emotionally connects with and influences a wider audience. This has helped bring additional awareness to the Academic All-America awards program and provided a national platform for that student-athlete as well as their university.

As MOAA representatives, we have an opportunity to play a significant role in shaping the messaging and stories that come from our athletics departments. Our members have unique stories to share and experiences that are different from their colleagues. There's strength in sharing your ideas and influencing the narrative.

Being part of the team that's empowering student-athletes and staff members to build their personal brands, and exposing audiences to new and exciting content is fun.

Storytelling is powerful.

McLENDON



Adrian Dowell

Creighton University
AVP/Associate AD for Development

Since its establishment in 1998, the John McLendon Minority Scholarship Foundation has awarded over 100 postgraduate scholarships, making a profound impact on the landscape of athletics administration and the lives of young men and women. To showcase the achievements of past John McLendon Minority Postgraduate Scholarship recipients, the Foundation presents "Where Are They Now?"

Adrian Dowell received the McLendon Scholarship in 2009. A native of Salem, Va., he earned a bachelor's degree in health & human performance –sport management from Roanoke College where he was a student-athlete and captain on the men's basketball team. He also received a master's degree in business administration and sport administration from West Virginia University (WVU) in 2011.

Dowell currently serves as the associate athletics director/assistant vice president of athletics development

at Creighton University after originally joining the staff in May 2014 as the assistant athletics director and senior director for development.

Prior to Creighton, Dowell worked at WVU on the Mountaineer Athletic Club staff. He was on staff at WVU for over five years and served his last three as the major gifts officer / director of development. Dowell was a part of a team that raised over \$106 million and he helped with the completion of a number of projects by securing major gifts for the Basketball Practice Facility, Football Weight Room, Football Team Auditorium, Women's Soccer Practice Facility and the Athletic Endowment Fund.

Before his time at WVU, Dowell worked at the NCAA National Office in Indianapolis. There, he was a member of the Division I Men's Basketball staff which is responsible for the administration of the NCAA Basketball Tournament and the Final Four.

How has the John McLendon Scholarship impacted your career?

Thanks to the John McLendon Scholarship, I was

able to attend graduate school and consequently enter the athletics development profession as an intern. I am not sure either would have been possible without this incredible scholarship.

Why did you pursue a career in athletics administration?

I've always had a passion for intercollegiate athletics and business, and this profession affords you the opportunity to do both.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?

The impact you can have on the lives of student-athletes and the peers you have the opportunity to work alongside each day.

What career advice would you give your younger self?

It's okay to fail as long as you're attempting to do things the right way and just admit to others when you've made a mistake. Also, not to be so eager or feel the pressure about pursuing the next step. Simply enjoy the moment and be the absolute best you can be in the job you have and the rest will likely take care of itself.