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It is no secret that diversity and inclusion are at the forefront of pertinent issues to the NCAA and its member institutions. In 2016, the NCAA initiated the Presidential Pledge, which calls for its members to recruit and interview athletics directors, coaches and administrators that represent diverse backgrounds. It is important for department heads to assess diversity, which not only includes race and ethnicity, but extends to gender, age, religion and educational background. Inclusion, however, which allows for employees to feel involved, empowered and recognized, can be more difficult to measure than diversity.

Maintaining a diverse and inclusive workplace opens the door for a wide range of viewpoints to be shared. Internship programs, volunteer opportunities, mentorship programs, and part-time opportunities that allow for collaboration between senior administrators and rising administrators are undertakings that pave the way for fresh

contributions and ideas that help benefit the department as a whole. When all levels of staff are given opportunities to evaluate real time challenges, offer solutions, and contribute to strategic planning, the department is more likely to sustain long term successes, with the added benefit of employees feeling actively engaged.

The role of the business operations office within the collegiate athletics department is to serve as the liaison between the department and the university as a whole, ensuring that policies and procedures are adhered to at both the NCAA and the university level. College athletics administrators that hold roles in the business operations field have the opportunity to establish positive reputations and may function at senior levels for many school year cycles. These administrators can develop strong internal controls, create balanced budgets, and can build strong relationships with coaches and campus partners. How does the CFO respond when a junior staff member identifies and presents a new innovative approach that will allow for coaches to better understand their budget to actual reports? CFO consideration of alternative operational approaches or practices allows for program enhancements that may facilitate long term program advancements.

As an intern, a part-time employee and now as a full time collegiate athletics employee, I have served within the business office at four vastly different institutions. I purposefully think of ways that I can do my job in a manner that is more efficient, yet still aligns with the goals of the department and university. The conversations and collaborations fostered with and through my mentor that I was assigned through the CABMA Mentor Me Program have inspired me to develop new skills as well as identify creative and cost-effective ways in which I can nurture new ideas that may transition to long standing business practices.

Diversity and inclusion is not limited to a singular lens. While smaller athletics departments with fewer administrative positions and limited budgets may have a tougher role in hiring a diverse set of candidates, it is invaluable to create a business operations department culture that honors and celebrates all employees for their unique contributions and strengths.



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