

D2 ADA



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As we all reflect on the past couple of months, I have been giving a lot of thought to Brene Brown's quote, "You can't get to courage without rumbling with vulnerability." Dr. Brown also speaks to her belief that vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity, and change. As athletics directors, we have been rumbling with a significant amount of vulnerability as we all work to set a tone that demonstrates a sense of calmness while collaborating with our peers on campus to ensure that we are leading responsibly.

When I think about leading in a responsible manner, that means to me that I need to take special care to be authentic, empathetic, and to pay closer attention as to how I am communicating with my staff and campus community. It's essential to be able to have tough conversations with my staff and others throughout my university. Even though I must admit, at times, that everything related to COVID-19 has been changing so quickly, it

has been challenging to keep all of the issues that have arisen into some sort of perspective. Angst such as this reminds me of Simon Sinek's Ted Talk on "How great leaders inspire action." Sinek speaks to the importance of understanding your "why" in life. I would guess that most of us know our purpose and that we believe, as Sinek does, that "people don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it." So, during this time of COVID-19, I am thinking about my purpose, which I believe is to empower people to be the best versions of themselves. This requires that I lead by demonstrating empathy and ensuring that I am clearly communicating to my staff that they matter to me. Furthermore, it is incumbent on me to listen deeply and to show up for them every day. After all, I am blessed to have a job that I love, and having the chance to live my purpose is even more critical now than ever as we rumble with issues such as budget reductions, lay-offs, furloughs, and our friends losing loved ones.

In summary, we must not think of vulnerability as a weakness, but instead as an opportunity for all of us to create meaningful changes in our lives, workplaces, friendships, and the world. One thing we all know for sure is our lives will be different moving forward. It will take grit, compassion, and faith as we work to open our campuses and to restart our athletics programs. I have learned through all of the challenges of

COVID-19 that I am irrefutably hard-wired for connection. Gosh, I don't know about you, but I am missing my "peeps." Let's collaborate as we think through how to safely open up our campuses as we are going to need innovative ways to work through the many challenges that lie ahead.

D2 CCA



Daniel Mara

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Flexibility and Cooperation Vital as Athletics Administrators Adjust to Uncertain Times

Athletics administrators are certainly facing difficult times during the COVID-19 pandemic, as we adjust for the 2020-21 season without knowing how the virus will spread. Schools and conferences pride themselves on being organized a year in advance, but the pandemic has hindered that rhythm for all.

Flexibility will be vital for all involved when making these adjustments. Every aspect of a school and conference must be evaluated during this process, as we determine what is the most efficient way to operate in the upcoming athletics season. Decisions that in the past would allow for significant time and discussion must now be made at a quicker pace to stay up-to-date with unfolding events in our country. However, despite needing to make more timely decisions, they are

not made lightly, and are being done with the best interest of student-athletes, coaches, administrators and fans in mind.

As we adjust to the current uncertainty, administrators at the NCAA Division II level have always proven to be cooperative in working together to strengthen the division and elevate the experience for the student-athletes. It is no different now.

It has been nothing short of amazing to see how athletics administrators from various parts of the country have come together to devote countless hours to discussing and proposing ideas that will keep the division moving forward. Each one of us has had to consider options that may not be in the best interest of our own institution or league, but what is best for the division. The passion presented in each viewpoint and discussion is evident, and the ability to listen intently to all ideas is sincere. We have learned more about our colleagues during these discussions, and how strong they are as individuals. Constituencies in Division II, D2 ADA, D2 CCA and NCAA staff have dedicated their time to the decision-making process, while also working from home taking care of the needs of their family members. I cannot thank everyone enough for their time and commitment.

Unprecedented and difficult decisions have already been made, and most likely will continue to be made over the next several months. There is no blueprint for this pandemic, and not all decisions will be popular with all groups. However, please know that we are working hard to make sure student-athletes continue to have the opportunity to work and compete for the lofty goals they have set for themselves and their respective careers.