

FCS ADA



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Mindset is everything!

In late February, early March when we began learning of the COVID-19 pandemic, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to foresee such a debilitating set of circumstances for higher education and more specifically intercollegiate athletics. For coaches, staff and student-athletes it was the start of an exciting time of year with March Madness just getting underway, spring sports in full swing and senior student-athletes heading toward the ultimate prize, graduation! In a relatively short period, COVID-19 has challenged us individually, transformed the way we interact, wreaked havoc on our institutions and attacked the very fabric of our society. In the vernacular, COVID-19 "knocked us out of the game."

Uncertainty breeds anxiety. During these uncertain times, we have to look no further than the lessons we have learned through athletics to show us the way forward. We can apply the same guiding principles utilized in any crisis we faced before COVID-19: take care of the people first, stick with the facts and communicate with transparency. These are principles we use all the time as athletics administrators when dealing with difficult situations. These same principles are more valuable now, in this time of unprecedented circumstances and uncertainty, than ever before.

As we work our way through difficult decisions on our respective campuses, it is imperative that we do not succumb to tunnel vision. In fact, we should be doing the exact opposite; we should slow down our thought process and widen our scope of understanding. The issues we face today are more complex than ever and require the ability to balance many competing interests simultaneously. The irony here is that we offer the exact same advice to our injured student-athletes every day. We tell our young men and women not to rush back, strengthen the area around the injury and follow the advice of medical professionals. We construct plans for rehab and we adjust those plans as new information becomes available. In essence, we tell

our injured student-athletes, the people we lead, to slow down and widen their scope of understanding in order to get healthy.

In times of crisis people look to sports as a process for healing. However, as much as we want to return to "normal," we need to be careful and consider the people and institutions we serve. What is in the collective best interest? As leaders, we must continue to lead through crisis and not simply manage. While we deal with the issues at hand, we must keep one eye on the future. This is the difference between surviving and thriving.

I challenge all of us to view the circumstances we are facing as an opportunity to recalibrate our industry and our athletics departments, reconnect with family and appreciate how truly blessed we are. If we use this time wisely to prepare for the future, this is an incredible opportunity for college athletics to be a leader in our ability to reunite and do so responsibly. The mindset we choose will determine our path forward!

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