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Chris Reynolds

Bradley University

Vice President for
Intercollegiate Athletics
2020-21 President

It is a distinct honor and privilege to serve as DI-AAA ADA President for the 2020-21 academic year. Undoubtedly, we are experiencing extraordinary times with all of the issues happening in our society today, ranging from the COVID-19 pandemic, matters related to social justices, conversations around name, image and likeness (NIL), as well as the state of our economy and its impact on our athletics programs. Moreover, we are faced with issues related to doing what we can to provide our student-athletes with a quality experience while being vigilant regarding their physical and mental health and safety.

As we know, there is no blueprint on the best way to navigate our athletics departments during these challenging times. However, as athletics administrators, we must do our best to provide strong leadership and an unwavering desire to get on the other side of these issues in

a manner that sets our departments on a path to best serve our student-athletes, coaches and staff while remaining true to our respective core missions and values. Here are three guidelines that may be useful in helping leaders to navigate the uncharted waters we are experiencing on our respective campuses.

1. Communicate Early and Often

During challenging times, the instinct is to circle the wagons, adopt a bunker mentality or close ranks. However, this is the opposite of what should be done to ensure that our supervisors are engaged and have confidence we are making the appropriate decisions while moving our departments in the right direction. Sharing information with others demonstrates you are open and honest in your dealings with them and are professional in performing your duties. Furthermore, this keeps your supervisor and others from guessing or wondering if you are withholding information and allows them to be informed in what is known, what has been planned, what decisions have been made and what is anticipated in the short and long term.

2. Don't Allow Your Emotions to Overwhelm You

In times of uncertainty, leaders are often faced with challenging decisions and circumstances

that cause stress, which may have a direct impact on mental health. Consequently, it is important for leaders to take the emotions and feelings out of decision-making while focusing on controlling the controllable. Getting proper sleep, exercise and quiet time for reflection is paramount. Otherwise, a leader may get caught in life's spin cycle and feel as though people, events and circumstances are driving their mood changes and clouding perspective. Always remember, the speed of the captain is the speed of the ship. The appropriate leadership demeanor is vital to instilling confidence in others of your leadership of the department.

3. Remain Positive and Fearless and Manage Expectations

Remaining positive and fearless and managing expectations may be three separate items, but they are similar in that during uncertainty, challenges and disappointments, leaders must know who they are and stay true to being their best self consistently over time. In short, departmental employees need leaders to remain unshaken and provide a sense of calm in the midst of evolving and unpleasant circumstances.

All the best to you during this academic year and know that we stand ready to provide any support we can during these uncertain times!