

NADIIIAA



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Division III Continues to Navigate the Pandemic

It is a difficult assignment to capture what institutional and conference administrators have persevered through the past six months. If we concur the adage, "We age not by years, but by stories," is indeed accurate, then Division III athletics leaders have aged well beyond the six months that have consumed our vocation going back to last March. The 2020 chapter for athletics administrators will undoubtedly include some of the longest and most challenging stories to be told when the book finally closes on this pandemic.

There is no "playbook" for how to commendably lead a conference or institutional athletics department through a pandemic. With no precedence to learn from or rely on and no simple recipe that can quickly cure all of the complexities the pandemic has exposed,

athletics administrators have relied on each other more than ever. Be it the sharing of ideas or simply offering a listening ear that can truly say – *I understand* – perhaps one of the positive outcomes that will emerge from this season is increased collaboration.

As the exhaustion hits new levels for Division III athletics administrators with little to no reprieve in the summer months, the reality is the challenges remain. The fluidity of information to process and best practice guidance to assess evolves not just weekly or daily but hourly at times. The governing regulations of local and state health authorities as well as those from the NCAA require institutions and conferences to continually assess their adherence and ability to meet such requirements.

Campus leaders are repetitively faced with the predicament of making critical, timely decisions that have long-lasting and far-reaching impacts. Finally, it seems the tallest challenge to resolve at times is a rare disconnect with student-athletes and coaches or athletics staff members. Athletics leaders don't have all the answers. We can't resolve a pandemic immediately. This chapter we are journeying through will include the testing of trust in athletics administrators because of competing priorities of so many that rely on such leadership.

So as we continue to provide inspiring leadership despite challenging circumstances, let's go back to our Division III positioning platform and "The Three Ds" that we often promote and utilize to push our student-athletes but rarely assess ourselves:

- **Discover** new ways to lead - Identify innovative methods to connect with coaches and student-athletes and grow their trust, recognize new or expanded leadership traits you need to exemplify to those around you.
- **Develop** as a leader – Focus on solutions and not just the challenges, bring people together and support each other, evolve and grow individually so you can provide more direction for those around you.
- **Dedicate** your calling as a leader – Stay committed to your purpose, be devoted to the mission and the vision of your institutional athletics department or conference, remain focused on your compass to guide decision-making.

While the stories of the current pandemic chapter have aged many of us, I am hopeful that we can provide leadership and guidance for shaping what that next chapter will look like. The rewarding and positive stories to come in that next chapter will be possible because of the perseverance and commitment to keep marching forward.

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