

N4A



Dr. Brian Russell

University of Illinois

Senior Associate AD, Sports
Administration and Student-
Athlete Development

As we find ourselves standing on the precipice, heading toward monumental change in college athletics, never has it been more vital for academic and student-athlete development professionals to be skilled in selling the narrative of the work required to develop student-athletes holistically. With new NIL legislation, movement in conference realignment, impending impact of the Alston decision and a skyrocketing cost of doing business while navigating a global pandemic, the constant is the critical importance of positively impacting the lives of the young people who wear our uniforms. Certainly, a challenge we face with the unknown future is operating in a cost-containment world while many departments are searching for ways to be slimmer in operation.

At a minimum, a leader needs to meet two challenges to be strong in this space:

1. Be able to develop and articulate a big-picture vision for the unit to align with the goals of the institution and match the philosophy of the development team working daily to raise funds for all areas of the athletics department.
2. Hire and develop people into key roles on the team that will enhance the unit's brand while providing a high-level of impactful service to student-athletes and coaches.

The first challenge comes with experience and professional mentorship. It is a learned skill to be able to clearly develop and articulate a vision and tell the student-athlete story well. I have been fortunate to have learned from great mentors. The reality is that if you're reading this, you also have the fortune to pull from these resources as well. Utilize the N4A mentor program and seek out leaders in our industry who have done this well. Be active and learn from them.

The second challenge takes time and includes factors beyond each leader's control. But within each leader's control is the ability to take a strategic approach to recruitment and hiring. Understand which positions are critical to diversify the team, push the unit forward in thought, and have the ability to impact the unit's brand positively on a larger scale. As a

leader, are you taking that challenge with intentionality? As someone seeking to make an impact in a new role, are you searching out roles that align with your ability to enhance a unit's brand?

If leaders are diligent in meeting the challenges above, there is no question the narrative of the importance of student-athlete development and success will be maximized. It's a tall task in these changing times, but the impact is deep in the ability to maintain resources to enhance the student-athlete experience.

NAAC



Richard Keroack

University of North Carolina

Assistant Director of
Compliance - Financial Aid

Compliance administrators are rich in data access. We are some of the privileged few people on campus that can ask for and be granted credentials to just about any data set that we need, all in the name of institutional control. I can personally login to the NCAA apps, compliance software, student accounts and financial aid modules, admissions dashboards and a NIL disclosure platform.

I want to encourage all of my peers to use this access to your advantage and position yourself to provide additional value to your department above your normal compliance responsibilities. It can be really easy. The only prerequisite is that you need to be curious and thoughtful.

Think about the NCAA transfer portal for example. To what extent is your office involved?

Are you simply entering the student-athlete's name into the portal and then moving on to your next task? There is a hidden

data analysis opportunity inside if you look deeper.

When I log in to the transfer portal, I see a data set waiting to be mined. Your AD or chancellor might want to know how many students entered the transfer portal within the past year. That data is easy to extract and provide to them. However, you could be providing so much more insight by diving just a little bit deeper into the data!

In addition to a simple count of transfer portal entries, you could provide your AD a historical comparison. Did your institution have more transfers out this year compared to years past? If so, was the increase substantial? If it was, is there a rational explanation?

You can also provide your transfer portal figures to your AD in a context relative to your peers. Perhaps your institution had more transfer portal entries this year than it's ever had before. That stat is pretty negative. It signals those students might not be happy with their experience. Drill down deeper and take a look at your conference peers. Maybe what seems like a

lot of transfers to your school is actually pretty average relative to the other schools in the conference. This extra analysis turns a seemingly negative stat into a neutral one.

My favorite variable in the transfer portal is the Student Status column. Not enough attention is paid to the students with Matriculated status. UNC ranks about in the middle of the ACC in total number of transfer portal entries (keep in mind that we sponsor 28 sports). But we rank in the top third of the ACC in matriculation rate. This means that UNC student-athletes that choose to transfer find new homes at an above-average rate. Although we would prefer to see fewer transfers, matriculations are good outcomes because they mean that the student has found somewhere more suitable to play and, more importantly, continue their education.

I encourage all of you to go above and beyond the standard reporting requirements. Sometimes the traditional way that data is reported doesn't tell the whole story. Think critically about all of the information that you see and how you could leverage it into a competitive advantage for your institution and show that compliance administrators can contribute beyond the conventional regulatory scope.

@NAACConnect