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The past two years in college athletics were not for the faint-hearted.

In March 2020, we had emotionally-charged meetings with our athletes, informing them of a premature end to the year. A few months later, we scrambled to fit a year's worth of sports into the spring of 2021; then the Alston decision; followed by NIL madness; now the Transformation Committee. We have spent over 30 months now with the ground moving beneath our feet. Meanwhile, members of the media and elected officials take every opportunity to lump all of us in with the minority of programs that compromise on the stated values of the NCAA. These outside voices demand never-ending changes that grind us down in many ways, but somehow never satisfy the critics.

In light of all that, it seems natural that many among us feel uncertain and even defensive about what we do. I want to use this space to take a deep breath and remind myself (and hopefully some of you) why this enterprise is worthwhile and worth defending.

In the DI-AAA subdivision alone, we provide about \$500 million in athletics scholarships to students. All but a miniscule number of those students would be unable to earn money in their sport outside of that scholarship. Further, many would have no access to a college education, let alone to the array of academic and personal support resources our programs provide. Without looking any deeper than that, we should see the value in Division I athletics.

But if you sit where we do, you know how much more good there is to a Division I athletics department. Athletics enriches campus life, providing the finest opportunities for our campus community to physically come together. Athletics provides invaluable exposure for our institutions, making our schools top of mind for prospective students who drive enrollment growth. Athletics keeps alumni engaged for life, and brings them back to support future

generations of students.

Most importantly, as ADs, we get the opportunity to directly impact the lives of young people. Early in my career, I was most excited about being on the bench for a BIG EAST Basketball Championship at Madison Square Garden or being on the sidelines at a Rose Bowl. With many more years of perspective, I think about the most important moments now and they look different: Sitting with an athlete who lost a friend to violence and is now 2,000 miles from home in need of a shoulder to cry on; Seeing a substitute check into the game after a year of grueling rehab and knowing how much pain and grit went into their return; Having an athlete once at risk to even graduate come to my office grinning ear-to-ear with a law school acceptance letter.

I am proud of what we do. Even amidst the current chaos, most of us would not choose any other field. Whatever comes next, stay confident that the good will continue to outweigh the bad, and that the enterprise of college athletics will continue to be worth defending.



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