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How New Orleans Athletics Connected with its Community

When I arrived at the University of New Orleans in June 2019, I hit the ground running with a themed campaign concept of “#100Meetings100Days.”

The premise was to create a public campaign to highlight meetings with key alumni and community stakeholders in hopes of raising awareness of University New Orleans Athletics. After the 100 days, in true New Orleans style we hosted a party for the people I met in the 106 external meetings I attended in my first three months. At that party, I presented the findings of what I had learned. Out of those meetings, we discovered key ingredients, which eventually led to the development of #NOLAsTeam 2025 Strategic Plan. Specifically, strengthen the New Orleans connection. Three key areas that assisted in the development of our strategic plan included compelling storytelling, community service, and inviting the community to campus.

During my #100Meetings, alumni repeatedly told me we needed to do a much better job of telling our story. The first thing we did is update our website to provide larger, bolder pictures and more videos to capitalize on the growing trend of digital storytelling. We also created a weekly e-newsletter, Blues on Tues, which highlights the best stories from the previous week and is emailed to donors, alumni, students, faculty and staff. Finally, we created Inside #NOLAsTeam, a behind-the-scenes show that aired on Cox Sports TV and shared the best stories about our student-athletes and coaches.

In my previous two times in “The Chair,” community service came to the forefront of how I wanted to give back to the community. At the University of New Orleans, that became an integral part of our plan. I challenged our coaches and student-athletes to dive into community service, and they did in a big way. After my first year, New Orleans Athletics was ranked No. 1 in the country in 2019-20 according to the Division I Helper Helper Community Service Report. The same year, our student-athletes won the Southland Strong Community Service Award. These stories garnered national, regional, and most importantly, local attention that caused people in the area to notice something different happening on the Lakefront.

When I moved here, I was surprised to learn there were 11 colleges and universities in and around New Orleans, including seven four-year institutions. However, we are the only school to proudly wear the city's name across our jerseys. We understand this privilege and choose to honor that responsibility by allowing various partners to utilize our facilities. From club volleyball teams' practice, to high school tennis and baseball team competition, to local and national nonprofits hosting fundraising events, to other universities with needs that sometimes exceed their capacities, we provide the use of our facilities at market rates to provide a home to other members of the New Orleans community.

Whether you create a branded campaign to highlight your listening tour or you decide to keep your meetings private, I would advise any new athletics staff member to spend the first several months defining and listening to key members of your community. Find your community, listen, learn and develop a plan to move your unit or sport program forward with the best strategies from your listening tour.

McLENDON



McLendon Foundation and underdog venture team announce partnership to impact the sports industry

The McLendon Foundation and underdog venture team announced a strategic partnership rooted in each organization's shared mission to expand opportunities for underrepresented communities in the sports industry. The focus of the partnership is to elevate the Foundation through expanded marketing and brand development, partnerships and strategic organizational enhancements to make a lasting impact.

The McLendon Foundation, administered by the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA), is dedicated to the educational advancement and cultivation of minority administrators.

The McLendon Foundation was established in 1999 by NACDA to honor the legacy of Hall of Fame coach John McLendon who was a pioneer in the field of athletics, the game of basketball, and the civil rights arena. The McLendon Foundation's mission is to empower and develop minorities

who aspire to be principled leaders in athletics administration by providing educational resources and access to a life-long community of mentors. All organizational planning for the Foundation directly aligns with the values of Coach McLendon: Integrity, Education, Leadership and Mentorship.

underdog, experts in brand building within the sports and entertainment industries, brings its full suite of capabilities to bolster the important work being done by the McLendon Foundation.

The Foundation offers two programs with one goal: Create access and opportunity for minorities. The Minority Postgraduate Scholarship Program offers eight (8) \$10,000 postgraduate scholarships to minority candidates who are planning to pursue a master's degree in athletics administration or sport management. Over \$1,245,000 in scholarship funds have been awarded since the Foundation's inception. These individuals are known as McLendon Scholars.

The Minority Leadership Initiative (MLI) started in July 2020 as a coach-driven program to create access and opportunity for meaningful employment experience for minority candidates and enhancing their career options. Originally

funded by collegiate coaches (MLI Ambassadors), the MLI is a one-year program open to candidates with a Bachelor's degree. The initiative has drawn more than 80 coaches nationally from a variety of sports to serve as both ambassadors and the primary source of funding. In less than two years, the MLI eclipsed \$1.5 million in funding to fuel the significant growth of the participants (MLI Future Leaders). This financial commitment, coupled with strategic professional development networking and educational sessions, has resulted in over 98 percent of MLI Future Leaders advancing to full-time jobs following their participation in the program. For the 2022-23 academic year, the MLI features 60 Ambassadors supporting 50 Future Leaders working at 44 different schools/organizations.

The goal of the partnership is to establish the McLendon Foundation as the destination for curating diverse, best-in-class, career-ready talent for the sports industry. To get involved as an organization or coach, please contact Adrien Harraway (AHarraway@nacda.com).

