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Transition is inevitable; it is a part of life and a significant component of our industry. It can be exciting, refreshing, and fulfilling, while also providing an opportunity to reset as an individual and as a department. However, it can also be uncomfortable, intimidating, and may feel chaotic at times. Our individual and collective response to transition is the difference-maker in achieving early and sustained success. It involves new people, new processes, and a new environment, which stresses the importance of being dynamic and adaptable from day one.

I recently transitioned to my alma mater, the University of New Hampshire (UNH) after 11 memorable years at the United States Military Academy. UNH is a familiar place, geographically, but is uncharted territory as a college athletics professional. I was

comfortable at Army West Point, having established myself as an individual, a leader, and a member of a very strong internal operations team. I knew every square foot of our facilities, the systems, and the upgrades that were needed. Now I find myself looking for facility maps, using my GPS and retracing somewhat unfamiliar steps when traversing our buildings.

While the transition can seem daunting at times, it is attainable and a situation that I am excited to be a part of. During my first 100 days in this role, I have relied heavily on three key principles to guide me, especially as I acquire a new facilities portfolio.

First, acknowledge and appreciate where you currently are. Embrace the situation and benchmark with both qualitative and quantitative data. Gather candid and honest feedback from coaches, staff, student-athletes, university partners, and other key stakeholders so that you can establish a baseline.

Second, have a deliberate and measured approach from day one. Learn the facilities, the systems, the challenges, and opportunities so that you can set a bold vision moving forward.

That said, remember that change isn't always required, and transformative decision-making comes in time; patience is a virtue. Rely on those around you to help develop and subsequently audit your vision and plan.

The third and final principle is the need for strong leadership and support throughout the process. It's a perpetual arms race to build state-of-the-art facilities and upgrade existing spaces, so having the support of university and department leaders is of the utmost importance. Be transparent, educate as needed, and provide options to those involved.

I left a service academy with federally funded facilities, a unique financial set-up, and complex policies and procedures. I now embark on a new mission here at UNH, which is foundationally set, yet has a very high ceiling when it comes to facilities. In recent weeks, we've officially acquired the Whittemore Center, our 6,500-seat arena, from Campus Recreation, with the charge of turning it into a year-round events venue. It's time to establish a baseline, set our vision, and rally our stakeholders as we work toward turning this strategic priority into a reality.

Transition is inevitable. Embrace it from day one.



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Embracing a New Vision

In January, I joined my fellow CoSIDA Officers at the NCAA Convention to meet with influential leaders in college athletics. As members of all NCAA divisions voted overwhelmingly to overhaul the NCAA Constitution, I was struck by the similarities in the challenges faced by the two organizations. CoSIDA has taken proactive steps to overhaul the governance structure, providing expanded leadership opportunities and adopting an "All In" membership model. However, there is still significant work to be done.

Recently, we issued a branding survey and conducted interviews with past CoSIDA presidents, senior administrators and prospective members. The qualitative and quantitative feedback suggested that while the CoSIDA brand is universally recognized, it no longer serves our profession effectively.

Here are five reasons a change is necessary:

1. The CoSIDA brand does not reflect who we are today. As our responsibilities have evolved and expanded, the sports information label is no longer an accurate description. The majority of member schools within Divisions I, II and III do not brand their departments as sports information. As a member recently shared about her own organization: "Our goal is to be modern. However, before we can be modern, we have to be current."

2. Sounds the call for a change in mindset. The most fundamental change facing CoSIDA is the transformation of mindset. When I joined CoSIDA in the early 1990s, members were leaders of our profession and trusted confidants for athletics directors, executive directors and commissioners. Somewhere along the way, many in our membership lost a seat at the table and with it the influence strategic communications professionals need to ensure the success of our organizations. Athletics communicators must no longer cling to responsibilities prioritized by tradition, but embrace responsibilities demanded by the modern needs of intercollegiate athletics. Leaders invest resources in areas in which they see growth. We need to continue to position ourselves accordingly.

3. Bolsters our advocacy efforts. There is a disturbing trend of outstanding individuals leaving the business. We must proactively advocate for ourselves and others to stem the tide of talented professionals transitioning to other lines of work. Too often, our CoSIDA membership is marginalized with antiquated definitions of sports information and not recognized for their diverse expertise. This cannot be solved at the national level alone. We own the lion's share of that responsibility, individually.

4. Enhances our membership. Our new 2022-23 "All In" Membership will allow an unlimited number of athletics staffers to enjoy CoSIDA benefits for a group rate. The most dynamic growth could come with the addition of creative professionals. Currently, this group does not have an established national organization within intercollegiate athletics.

5. Supports our commitment to diversity and inclusion. CoSIDA remains vigilant in attracting and expanding opportunities for strategic communications professionals from underrepresented populations. While we have made progress, we are still woefully behind in attracting and maintaining individuals reflecting the diversity of our athletics programs.