

## D2 ADA



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Facilities have become more than just a place for our student-athletes to compete. Now facilities are places for all students and the campus community to utilize as a healthy, inclusive, sustainable, fun, safe place to train, hang out, and share community.

When building new facilities, thought needs to be given on how that space can be shared and utilized by the entire student body, community and for external renters to make it a strategically beneficial environment. In doing so, administrators can more easily secure funds based on the multiple uses for the whole campus to use and not only for working out, recreational sports and club sports usage. Campus events such as commencement, orientations, concerts, presidential events, job fairs and the ever important external rentals and camps can bring in significant revenue for a university. External renters have the added

benefit of exposing local organizations to your campus and allow for opportunities to market the institution to potential students and student-athletes.

Facilities can also help with your institutional branding and marketing efforts by providing recognizable spaces in which memories are made. It is important to put together a multi-year maintenance plan to repair and replace different pieces for your facilities. Every year I try to find a few things to enhance and brand. It can be as simple as adding a fresh coat of paint on a yearly rotation or purchasing and replacing new branded windscreens on the fields.

When creating new spaces, think about how the room can be flipped from entertaining donors to hosting a team meeting or a fitness class. What kind of technology do you have? Can you easily turn your gym into a job fair, athletics banquet, or commencement? Do you have the proper technology for showing video and graphics? Do you have the right sound system for presidential speeches, game day music, game day announcing, or outside rentals? Do you have the correct lighting to host regionals, to set an atmosphere where lighting changes for a banquet or dinner?

Facilities are also important to the overall health and well-being of all students. Studies have shown that physically and mentally healthy students have increased success academically. So be open and consider adding a health and wellness center, and counseling service space to your facilities. There is a way to make it all work and to balance the time and schedule for all users.

However, administrators should always put student users first. Athletics events, presidential events, recreational sports, and community service events should be given priority over external rentals. Coming from a small liberal arts institution with only one gym used by all the constituents listed above, there are ways to make it work, but you must be flexible and creative.

I cannot stress enough how doing a few things each year to improve and maintain the quality of your facilities makes a difference. Treat your facilities like you do your car. Keep getting tune ups, wash it, vacuum it and clean it and, when the time comes, trade it in and get a new one. My grandma taught me a great lesson, "We might not have the best of things, but we take care of the things we are blessed to have."

## D2 CCA



**Will Prewitt**

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League offices face a maelstrom of issues during these turbulent times, but one of the top priorities for the NCAA Division II Conference Commissioners Association is finding ways to help solve the exodus of contest officials.

A recent National Federation of State High School Associations survey estimates that 50,000 officials have discontinued their service since 2019. Collegiate officiating supervisors face unprecedented challenges in finding qualified men and women to work contests as the average age of officials nationally creeps toward the mid-50s.

The crisis in attracting and retaining officials hits particularly close to home for someone who wears dual hats as a commissioner by day and a

25-year football head linesman by night during the fall. Since this issue of *Athletics Administration* focuses

on facilities, here are a few suggestions on how the spaces that we utilize for officials' usage in our buildings can make them feel more valued.

A few simple changes in facility design or makeovers in existing spaces can create an environment where officials feel appreciated and are more prepared to arbitrate contests effectively. The era of treating officials as an afterthought and placing them in a storage space or vacant office isn't appropriate in 2022.

Accessibility to the playing surface without mingling with spectators provides benefits from a security perspective. Officials should also be able to access restrooms that are separate from fans. Nothing good ever happens when game officials must share areas with their constant critics.

Technical needs get overlooked at many venues. Wireless internet or hard-wired internet capabilities are crucial to a modern pre-game session. That's not available in some older or

remote outdoor venues. Adequate preparation isn't possible without access to services like Hudl, Synergy, and the like.

Accommodation of female officials and mixed crews is another realm where we could do better. Unfortunately, female officials do not receive adequate space or access to restrooms in many buildings. Common sense, not to mention equal accommodation laws, dictate they need commensurate dressing areas. Mixed crews also need a safe, comfortable space for pre- and post-game meetings.

One of the most common exit statements from former officials addresses a perceived lack of respect. It's a small step, but a more thoughtful utilization of officials' spaces within playing facilities is a start to helping turn the tide in the quest to retain our current staff members.