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If you are like me, not a day goes by that I don't think of possibilities to improve the facility experience for our student-athletes, coaches and fans. My mind keeps going like that treadmill that won't end because of the importance that up-to-date, clean, user-friendly facilities provide to everyone.

Facility management is all about identifying needs and fitting in with the footprint and the brand of the school and region. Thankfully, I have been blessed to work across multiple levels, Division II, Power 5, and mid-major conferences in Division I. The needs are always different depending on several factors – the two most relevant typically being the communities and the situations you inherit.

You must always be adaptable, sometimes what you think is best may not be the most practical option financially, optically or

structurally. I've also learned that sometimes it's the small gestures that mean just as much. It doesn't always have to be hanging a flashy scoreboard or building a new indoor practice facility from the ground up. It can be something as simple as replacing graphics to cover outdated walls or ordering new banners to outline your facility. You'll come to find out that the impact may be just as equal (and probably a lot better on your budget).

The first thing I do is identify the needs, both immediate and long-term, by using a variety of focus groups across campus. What can we do to make our facilities more attractive to recruits while also enhancing the current student-athlete experience? What will draw crowds to our home games and produce additional revenue? These factors go hand in hand when making these decisions. The harsh truth is that sometimes fans will come to an aesthetically pleasing arena or stadium that has multiple experiences no matter the outcome of the games. The same principle goes the opposite way as well—if the facility is not inviting and not up to the standards they are used to, they may not come back and watch even a successful team.

Constructing a master plan is always one of the most important phases when dealing with facilities. Working alongside stakeholders, your campus facilities department, donors, alumni, head coaches, and architects can present a challenge as all parties need to be on the same page. It can also be one of the fun parts, uniting campus constituents for the common goal of improving the department and campus. Those brainstorming sessions where we attempt to morph everybody's ideas into one final plan is rewarding and exciting because that means you are one step closer to your goal.

As we all know, this world isn't the same as it was when a lot of us got into this business. Social media is everything. I've found that the best way to grab attention in recruiting is quick clips of your nicer facilities. Make a virtual tour of your facilities on your website. We all know every potential student-athlete is constantly checking their phones throughout the day. Use that to your advantage and showcase your facilities so they are familiar with your program before they even step on campus.

I-AAA ADA



Scott Corley
Belmont University
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In the never-ending arms race of college athletics we all understand the need facilities play in the success of the department and quality of the student-athlete experience. At Belmont, we have been blessed to open two new state-of-the-art practice facilities in the past six months. On May 31, 2021, we opened the doors to the Crockett Center for Athletic Excellence, a \$25 million practice facility for men's and women's basketball, volleyball, and men's and women's tennis. Then in September 2021, we opened up the Rose Park Hitting Facility for baseball and softball. These are the first significant athletics facilities added in over a decade. How did these buildings happen and what impact have they had?

To begin with, the buildings are the result of the sustained success our coaches and student-athletes have demonstrated on the field, but more importantly off the field for three decades. Our Board of Trustees and leadership team values all the positive benefits athletics has contributed to the university including our academic excellence, strong graduation rate of our student-athletes, and impact our athletes have had in the Nashville community. Establishing a strong culture in these areas has led to greater support for the needed investment in facilities in order to compete on the field. I have said repeatedly that every former player, coach and staff member had a hand in these buildings becoming a reality.

The impact of these new buildings has been immediate and far reaching. Outside of the obvious impact on recruiting and player development, the facilities helped change a mindset. It demonstrates to all our coaches and student-athletes that the university values athletics and wants us to succeed. It also has allowed us to dream bigger than ever before. This is most evident in our recent decision to join the Missouri Valley Conference on July 1, 2022.

The decision from both parties was made easier given these recent investments.

So, as you consider your facility strategic plan, stay focused on the core principles of every athletics department: academic success, graduating your student-athletes and athletics success. I am a firm believer that if you accomplish these goals in that order, university leadership and donors will ultimately support the facilities of your dreams.