

# NACMA



## Jimmy Skiles

UCF

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I don't have any data to back this up, but I'm a firm believer that fans who come to participate in the game day experience have a lot more fun and are much more likely to be repeat customers than those who simply come to spectate. Fans can spectate from home watching on television. Whether it's high-fiving a student-athlete as the team walks into the stadium, singing along to the fight song, or screaming at the top of your lungs to cause a false start, participating in the pageantry of a college football gameday is what makes Saturdays in the fall so special.

UCF is one of the youngest universities in FBS football and our fanbase reflects that. The university's first graduating class was in 1970, we started playing FBS football in 1996, and we currently have over 70,000 students. We have more than 350,000 living alumni at an average age of 37 years old coming to an on-campus

stadium that was built in 2007. Our fanbase is young and wants to participate in a gameday experience that considers

that aspect.

At UCF home football games, we are fortunate that there is an expectation to participate thanks to the name of the stadium alone – The Bounce House. The name comes from the considerable amount of shaking and swaying of the stadium that fans experience when the crowd really gets going. The bouncing of the stadium is a sensation that first-timers can't wait to feel and returning fans feel a responsibility to create.

Each unit of the Brand Advancement team plays its part in creating the fan experience at the Bounce House and encouraging maximum fan participation. The Strategic Communications team tells the story from the coaches' and student-athletes' point of view and what an impact the fans make on the game. The #Content team captures every angle of the Bounce House experience to truly show how unique it is and distributes it to a global audience. The Productions team creates the moments in the stadium bowl through videos and crowd prompts. The Brand Experience team prepares the run of show, the playlist of

bangers, and is in charge of calling the game to make sure we never miss a bounceable moment.

The result is one of the toughest places to play in college football over the last five seasons, as is showcased by the Knights' 30-2 home record during that span (the two losses were suffered during the COVID-19 season with limited stadium capacity).

We're still recovering from 2020, when fans of many of our schools were unable to participate in any aspect of gameday. Our fans spectated from afar and we all know how much they were missed. As we enter the football offseason and planning for the fall of 2022, we should all look for ways in which we can bring maximum fan participation back to our football gameday experience.

@d3admins

# NADIIIAA



## Mike Wisecup

Colby College

Vice President and  
Harold Alfond Director of  
Athletics

In October 2020, Michael Smith, lead reporter for *Sports Business Journal* noted, "One of the most impressive collegiate athletics facilities in the country is about to open, and it's not in Ann Arbor, Austin, or College Station." Smith relates the dimensions and immense size of the building as good for many things, but one of the most attractive aspects of the design is that Colby chose not to isolate athletics, but instead build towards furthering inclusivity.

The equitable development approach was at the center of the design from the very first days of concept development and ensured all spaces were designed for diverse activities to meet broad institutional needs. It was essential to create a place that would be a crossroad for the entire campus community and beyond. One that not only consolidated all 32 varsity teams

together, but that housed a more robust and varied campus recreation program, classrooms for faculty, and improved venues for local youth programs (like the only 50-meter Olympic sized swimming pool in Maine).

There are the obvious improvements and advantages that come with new facilities for every athletics team: a larger strength and conditioning facility that can accommodate multiple teams, locker rooms that support the unique aspects of each sport, an athletic training room with state-of-the-art equipment for treatment and rehabilitation. However, the improvements that have had a more disproportionately positive effect are more subtle and often overlooked. For example, the increased size of each venue along with complex netting systems allows for scheduling of multiple teams, clubs and recreation programs simultaneously during the peak hours of use. This directly allows for a better-balanced and decompressed student schedule that improves their athletic preparation, nutritional replenishment, academic performance and ability to manage a heavy academic load.

"While some schools are getting crushed by the pandemic, a tiny northeastern liberal arts college

is unveiling 'Disney World for athletes.'" – *Forbes*

Although no one could have anticipated the current pandemic, we were fortuitous to have this facility come on line in the summer of 2020. With 354,000-square-feet to work with, we were able to spread over 100 pieces of cardio equipment throughout the building with proper distancing. The new ventilation system exceeded all medical requirements for indoor spaces and airflow. This combination meant that all students, staff and faculty could exercise without significant protocols and restrictions, i.e., running on treadmills without masks. This became the only place on campus that everyone could decompress. The mental health impacts of this alone were immeasurable, but definitely present.

When considering improving your athletics facilities, I encourage you to look beyond the direct effect on athlete and team performance. That is important, but as we have found, furthering the institutional mission of directly supporting the development, education and future success of all our students is the most notable benefit.