

NAIA-ADA



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“Facilities and game management sounds fun.”

That phrase is rarely used by aspiring students who want to be an athletics director. It is more along the lines of, “I want to do what you do!”

Well at the NAIA level, for most of us, we do everything - including facilities and game management. I was lucky enough, and I say that with my eyebrows raised and complete sincerity, to start my career in athletics as a graduate assistant for facilities, game management and intramurals at Gonzaga University. I was there in the early 2000s when they were building the McCarthy Athletic Center, where they play basketball. Although I had ZERO to do with any

planning or preparation, I was there for the grand opening and the first basketball season. The 6,000-seat arena has a lower and upper bowl, separated by approximately 100 60-pound railings, two semi-permanent hoops and four practice hoops. It was (and still is) amazing! What was more amazing was the group that had to set up and tear down the facility.

The hoops and bleachers are your standard set up and tear down for that type of facility, but not the railings. To be honest, the first two weeks we were fully open were a blur. We had a team of 10 student workers, two graduate students and a full-time staff member to take the railings on and off for about a week before someone said, “Why didn’t they just put 15 rails (and pointed to the concourse level to all the walkways) there?” When you are sweating, have a sore back and nearly trip and fall down a set of stairs with a rail in your hand, sometimes you see things differently. Luckily, the athletics administration at Gonzaga realized that this could and should be, and a few weeks later we

had the additional rails in place.

As an athletics director now, I can only imagine how much labor and salaries would have been allocated into taking those 100-plus railings up and down if we didn’t make that change. So often we want to do these great things, like build a new facility or put up a new video board, but we don’t account for the manpower and time that it takes to set it up and keep it (whatever it is) functioning at the highest level. So, go help your facility people set up, tear down or clean up. I guarantee you will come away with more than a sore back.

NATYCAA



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A Crash Course in Facility Development: Learning on the Run!

In January 2019, the leadership here at New Mexico Junior College (NMJC) generated a plan for facility development that rapidly grew from a \$1.5 million upgrade to our track facility to assist in the management of hosting the 2019 NJCAA Outdoor Men’s and Women’s Track and Field National Championship, to a \$21 million athletics overhaul! Through these major projects, I received an immense amount of knowledge, experience and strategies that grew just as quickly as our project development. NMJC added to the track development, a major facelift for our gymnasium, a 12,000-square-foot indoor golf facility and driving range along with replacing the outfield turf on the baseball field. The development and engagement of all of these projects culminated on the same time frame

and unknowingly under the cloud of the pandemic.

While engaging in these experiences, I became more confident in the following three areas as it pertains to project development and management: overall concept engagement, time frame strategies and problem solving, and finally, construction “lingo.” As these projects are discussed and developed on your campus, I recommend jumping in with both feet and asking as many questions as possible.

When New Mexico Junior College entered into a remodel of the gymnasium, the project was initiated due to the exhaustion of the life of water lines installed in the building in 1970. Simple enough, replace the water infrastructure and all is well. As our team began to open these plans, bigger and better ideas were born that allowed for the concept to become a growing improvement that could showcase our athletics programs. The forward vision that was opened provided opportunities to discuss what worked and what didn’t work with the operation of our existing facility. If NMJC was truly going to improve on the facility, what needs were on the table? This vision provided time to engage our coaching and athletic training staffs along with our administration staff. Bringing more voices to

the table becomes a time burden, but the satisfaction from all involved with the end result has been very embracing. Engage in the conversation with people that know your facilities the best. Tell the architects and your construction team what you need and don’t be shy!

Having a plan that works for three months down the road during any project is essential to keep a staff happy and progressing, especially if you have athletics teams competing and athletes continuing to use the renovated facilities. Plans for changing offices, storing furniture during the renovation, visiting team arrangements during hosted events, safety plans for fans and restroom facility availability must all be a piece of the project plan.

Finally, attending the architecture and construction planning sessions is essential. However intimidating at first, the outcome will be appreciated. These project teams NEED the input from an athletics-minded administrator. Pieces are missed and plans are misinterpreted unless your voice is available to interject. Having fun with the experience and learning as you go will allow you to enjoy your next project!