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Why is DEI important to your athletics department? If you want to get the most out of your teams and employees, you must tap into their true potential. Diverse teams are more innovative, make better decisions, and ultimately are more successful. Here are three steps to improving DEI:

1. Assess where your department currently stands. It sounds obvious, but you must have a baseline for the current culture in your workplace. In 2018, we brought a consultant to Long Beach State athletics to help us understand the current landscape related to DEI within our athletics department at that time. This began with two distinct comprehensive surveys, one for staff and coaches, and one for student-athletes. This is a critical step that provides a real snapshot of what people “feel” in your department related to culture. Following that survey, we conducted one-on-one


interviews with employees across the spectrum which included coaches, administrators, HR personnel and health and wellness staff. This step augmented the survey results and filled in any information gaps, clarified the departmental focus, and identified specific measurable goals for diversity and inclusion initiatives. Whether you outsource this step or conduct it in-house, to set a course for the future you must have data that gives you an honest view into the experience your employees and student-athletes live daily.

2. Strategic Planning. This is where you find out where your department really stands, and possible steps for improvement. We all view the world through a unique lens, and many times that lens can obstruct what the true landscape is and where pitfalls may exist. The findings and results of your surveys will shed light on the opportunities that exist within your department, and the interviews that follow the surveys will either confirm the results or provide further questions to ask. Including voices and listening to others is one of the most important steps in the planning process. It is easy to get tripped up at this point, but if you are inclusive and open to receiving and hearing what is sometimes tough feedback, you will have a chance to make a difference. The goals you will set may be difficult and challenging. Your roadmap for strategic

success includes planning, resources, strategy, a timetable, execution, and ultimately, achievement.

3. Next steps. Lead! So, you put a plan together, and have a strategic blueprint for the future. What now? Now is the tough part – ‘walking the talk.’ You will need to motivate, inspire, and lead change, which is never as easy as it sounds. What I found is that that it started with leading myself. How can you lead others if you can’t lead yourself? The ripple effect of a leader’s enthusiasm and optimism is awesome. You must lead from a positive position of “we will change things here.”


Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell once said, “Leadership is the art of accomplishing more than the science of management says is possible.” It will take true leadership to make the necessary changes to improving DEI in your department. May your journey be one of introspection, discovery and new beginnings!











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