

D2 ADA



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Developing a Winning Strategy for Capital Project Fundraising

As athletics directors, we all have to play a significant role in fundraising to move the needle for our athletics programs while enhancing our student-athlete experience. The need to continue to elevate our athletics facilities to remain competitive from a recruiting and retention standpoint requires emphasis on capital project fundraising.

At Lenoir-Rhyne University, we recently embarked on an \$18 million campaign to renovate our football and lacrosse stadium. It was originally built in 1942 and had served the university and community for almost a century. It was the fourth oldest stadium still standing in all of Division II. In 2019, the home grandstands had to be demolished due to degradation of the concrete. Once we figured out a short-term plan and brought in

temporary bleachers, this challenging situation soon turned into a pretty exciting opportunity with the prospect of major updates on the horizon for this iconic venue.

Fundraising for large capital projects requires strategy, game planning, and a lot of preparation. Building a strong foundation of annual giving is essential to be able to develop a pool of donor prospects that have been cultivated to the level where they are ready to make a larger contribution, yet in my experience, strategy, planning, and preparation are equally as important.

Developing the fundraising strategy to meet the bold \$18 million fundraising goal would be a significant challenge given all the major naming opportunities that had already been designated. Both the stadium and field were named. Co-naming the stadium or field were also not viable options. In this situation, the typical naming rights strategy wasn't going to work for this project and we had to really think outside the box.

Our campaign was called the "Centennial Campaign" to celebrate the century old stadium with \$100,000 and up donors receiving special

benefits and prestigious recognition. We also came up with a number of premier naming rights opportunities, including the opportunity to name our Athletic Campus, the Press Box, eight VIP suites, and VIP club seats. We leveraged several corporate naming opportunities and partnerships including naming the video boards, team tunnel, and concession areas. We incorporated planned giving as a major component of the campaign along with the option of five-year pledges. We formed a campaign leadership committee made up of alumni and community leaders who were instrumental in helping to cultivate and solicit prospective donors to reach the campaign goal.

We were able to raise 100 percent of the funds externally toward the campaign goal in less than a calendar year. It was the largest amount of donations ever raised for a single project in the history of the university. In the same way we cannot expect our teams to win the big games without preparation, game planning and strategy, I have come to appreciate that we also cannot expect the level of success with fundraising for capital projects without first developing a winning strategy.

D2 CCA



Matt Wilson

Gulf South Conference
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D2 CCA Continues to Lead

As the ongoing work of reimagining the governance, administrative structure, and overall mission of the NCAA continues into another academic year, the Division 2 Conference Commissioners Association (D2 CCA) will continue to be at the forefront of all conversations and collaborate with other constituent groups while maintaining leadership roles in operationalizing the change.

As I have the privilege to serve as D2 CCA President for 2022-23, it is exciting to join my other 22 colleagues in this unique opportunity.

The conference commissioners have been active participants every step of the way since the COVID-19 pandemic served as a catalyst

for reflecting on the way college sports are administered within the NCAA.

I am thankful for their willingness, resourcefulness, and perseverance.

Looking forward to the next year, new opportunities will be ahead for this Association. Our conferences innovate in the space of consumer video options using a variety of effective partners and methods to provide access to our fans while supporting the revenue needs of our memberships. Investment from the conferences and member institutions as well as the demands of our consumers will help drive this success.

Developing strategies to grow the membership of Division II and affirm Division II as the appropriate place for our current members will continue for many. This will require us to be clear on the value proposition for institutions. In my opinion, that will require focus on branding and championship experience. Maybe our branding should be about championships both at the conference and divisional level by putting resources into those events to enhance the overall experience and increase our already NCAA-best access ratio for student-athlete participation. This might require additional margin in calendars and budgets.

With a new Association president and significant new legislation throughout each division, the overall mission and philosophy of the NCAA will be examined. What will the coming years look like? I am hopeful that a "big tent" approach will continue to serve the 1,100-plus members of the NCAA and want to work alongside the other divisions to preserve it. The D2 CCA will be a valuable partner in this process.

Finally, preparing future leaders through a variety of collaborations remains a key initiative for commissioners. D2 CCA partners with Women Leaders in College Sports, CoSIDA, NACDA, D2 ADA, NCAA, and many others at the institutional and conference level to help develop the next pool of thought leaders for Division II.

The work is fun. The work is challenging. The work is rewarding. I'm thankful to get to do it alongside 22 other fantastic leaders. Let's get to work!