

## N4A

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**The Impact of Athletics Facilities**

Successful student-athletes are not just built on the field or on the court alone. The real development happens behind the scenes. There are many areas that impact the student-athlete experience including the weight room, sports medicine, nutrition stations, and academic spaces. Athletics professionals know student-athletes face many time demands that impact their success. Athletics facilities are in many ways the front porch of universities. They are usually a big part of the physical footprint of a university and are readily visible to the public. Often times the public may just see athletics facility upgrades as just a way to keep up with the Joneses, but in reality, we must keep in mind

that most upgrades enhance the student-athlete experience. We know these facilities help fulfill the mission of graduating educated and well-rounded leaders for the future.

One example of the impact of enhanced facilities can be found at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA). In 2021, UTSA opened a \$40.4 million athletics facility, the Roadrunner Athletics Center of Excellence (RACE). The building has brought student-athletes, coaches, athletics staff, and administrators under the same roof for the first time. RACE provides a central location for UTSA athletics and promotes the academic success, health, wellness, and performance of UTSA's student-athletes. The new facility has given student-athletes, coaches, staff, and the San Antonio community pride and purpose.

A successful athletics facility is a "one-stop-shop." Student-athletes can navigate their training, academic schedules, and their multiple time demands in a seamless location. Student-athletes are able to transition from athlete to student (and vice versa) all under the same roof without wasting time transitioning from facility to facility. State-of-the-art facilities such as practice facilities, weight rooms, and sports medicine

centers provide student-athletes with the opportunity to maximize their training and performance potential. Advanced technology in these facilities enhances the growth and development of student-athletes and encourages academic success.

Everyone wants to work or spend their recreational time in a facility that provides the ambiance of success, professionalism, and enjoyment. Creating an environment that promotes and supports is a catalyst for student-athletes to maximize their potential. A good example is the nearly 95,000-square-foot RACE building that includes academic spaces, a sports medicine center, nutrition station, strength and conditioning facilities, locker rooms, meeting rooms, offices for staff and coaches, an equipment room, and practice fields. The RACE facility also aids in recruiting top student-athletes and promotes their holistic success in the classroom and on the field.

Student-athlete success is at the core of what college athletics professionals strive to achieve every day. State-of-the-art facilities, technology, resources, and staff help enhance student success in a variety of ways which creates the foundation for stronger academic and athletics commitments.

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## NAAC

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For as long as I have been involved with NAAC, we have strived to leverage the knowledge and expertise of the individual professionals that make up our organization in the governance process. Where and how we best fit into the structure – one that, in fairness, is constantly evolving – and trying to formalize a so-called "seat at the table" has and continues to be a work in progress. This is something our Officers and Board of Directors discuss consistently. We have made great strides thanks to the hard work of our Past Presidents, Committees, and other leaders, but there is more work to be done, and that will extend well beyond my one year as President. Exactly how we solidify our engagement needs to become more sophisticated. This is obviously a significant time of change, and with forces at play threatening the model as we know it, change is being necessitated in a way that is fluid and will

not always produce perfect, practical outcomes. We cannot give up or give in to exasperation;

instead, we must see the big picture and rely on our expertise to inform and influence the leaders making the decisions that are charting the future of college athletics. I hope we all take the opportunity to be resources in our campus and conference communities.

Two priorities I see for the NAAC membership during the remainder of the academic year (and beyond) include: 1. NAAC/Compliance involvement in governance, and specifically, the recently endorsed Transformation Committee concepts; and 2. Professional development for compliance professionals as the college athletics enterprise evolves.

One specific example from this past fall was a memo addressing Proposal 2022-20, which we provided directly to members of the Board of Directors, Division I Council, and NCAA staff and later shared with the entire Legislative Committee. The document was the result of hard work from our Legislation and Governance Committee, chaired by Blake Barlow (Texas). We believe this serves as an effective template for ensuring our voice is not only heard, but is influential in working alongside the Division I committees tasked with pushing the recently

endorsed Transformation Committee recommendations forward.

The second priority is professional development for our entire membership, including support with the tools to be successful as the enterprise – and subsequently the compliance profession – changes rapidly. (Good) Compliance is risk management. How are we allocating our resources? Does it match our highest risk areas that we as an institution can control? How do we reorganize our approach and continue to be a value-add for our campus community, university leadership, and athletics department? These are heavy questions and the answers have changed dramatically in the past two, five, and 15 years. Whether you are a sitting athletics director, oversee the day-to-day compliance operation, or just entered the profession, these questions are relevant, and we plan to offer more programming and development opportunities to guide you in these areas.

We need the expertise of our entire membership to maximize our impact and best serve each other. When asked to provide feedback or engage on issues, please respond. We need your perspectives. Participation and feedback represent tangible ways every member can contribute to NAAC. Your voice is critical to moving us forward!