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SCIAC

Commissioner

2022-23 President

As we turn to new leadership at the NCAA under President Charlie Baker, DIICA is excited and appreciative of his efforts to meet with the Presidents, directors of athletics and commissioners from each conference in his first 90 days. The overt inclusion and recognition of all three divisions within the Association is a welcome hallmark of President Baker's transition to the NCAA.

We also recognize the coordinated effort from the National Office to have all divisions participate in congressional engagement for the hopeful development of national laws and standards around the classification of

student-athletes, NIL protections for student-athletes, safe harbor from certain litigation and the preemption of state law. The Division III story is an important one to tell during this effort as we treat athletics the same as any other co-curricular on campus. Our student-athletes can walk away at any time and their financial commitments from the school are not disrupted. Our athletes want and have control over their athletics careers and how they fit with their chosen academic path. The understanding that this is how the majority of the Association operates can be a key detail in helping Congress and the general public understand the true scope of collegiate athletics.

The most recent Board of Governors meeting saw them support Division I's holistic student-athlete model which requires Division I schools to provide increased academic and health benefits for college athletes. The Board of Governors also asked President Baker to continue exploring health care models for

Divisions II and III. It is imperative that any commitments that the Association makes to provide student-athletes increased benefits should be structured so Division III can continue to meet these requirements. It is important to understand how Division III is staffed and financed differently before we are required to provide the same benefits as Division I. Any possible new requirements should not prevent Division III institutions from offering intercollegiate athletics. The stability and future of many universities are based on offering broad-based co-curricular activities, including athletics. Many colleges and universities ARE the towns they are located in; often they are the largest employers in the district in many cases.

As the NCAA and President Baker want all institutions to participate in the congressional engagement with one voice, it will be much easier to speak as a unified voice if we hear the Division III voice in the message.



Ken Beazer

Utah Tech University

Executive Director of Intercollegiate Athletics

Utah Tech University recently embarked on an ambitious journey of transformation. With a mission to become an open, inclusive, comprehensive, polytechnic university, the institution took on a significant rebranding process, transitioning from Dixie State University to Utah Tech University. In a similar bold move, the institution engaged another transformative journey - committing to the transition of its athletics department from NCAA Division II to NCAA Division I status. Two daunting transitions working simultaneously together towards academic excellence and athletics achievement.

Rebranding a well-established institution like Dixie State University was no small feat. The decision to change the name to Utah Tech University was made to better reflect the institution's commitment to technology, innovation, and academic excellence. Similarly,

the decision to elevate its athletics programs to the NCAA Division I level brought additional challenges and opportunities for the university and its student-athletes.

One of the primary challenges of the university's rebranding process was preserving the institution's heritage while embracing the future. Dixie State University had a strong legacy and a close-knit community that identified with the "Dixie" name. However, the rebranding aimed to ensure inclusivity and align with the evolving values of the university and the broader community it serves.

While most of the university's students, faculty and staff supported the rebrand, various university stakeholders, alumni, and community members with emotional attachments to the existing name were more resistant and expressed opposition to the name and mission change. While this opposition created numerous challenges in building support for the rebrand, it opened the door for Trailblazer athletics to assume a critical role in leading the rebranding efforts.

Utah Tech athletics quickly became central to the successful rebranding of Utah Tech University and played a vital role in facilitating the university's transition and creating a new identity that resonated with students, faculty, and the wider community. Furthermore, the

status as an NCAA Division I athletics program expanded the geographical reach of the university, leveraging sports as a powerful tool to gain brand recognition and market share at a quicker pace.

The university's rebranding campaign was to quickly create a new visual identity that extended beyond mere symbolism to cultivate a culture of excellence and accomplishment that would resonate with students, fans, and key stakeholders. Athletics events and facilities were the most visible and consistent medium by which to accomplish that initiative.

Utah Tech athletics acted as a unifying force behind the rebranding process, bringing together students, faculty, alumni, and the community. Sporting events have provided a platform for individuals from all walks of life to come together and rally behind a common cause, fostering a sense of camaraderie and school spirit that can be felt far beyond the athletics department.

Utah Tech University's rebranding journey has been a remarkable endeavor that has showcased the transformative power of sports. By leveraging the passion, energy, and community appeal of intercollegiate athletics, Utah Tech University has been able to successfully launch an unbelievably difficult rebrand in a short period of time.