

I-AAA ADA



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It is easy to get caught up in the day-to-day of our jobs working in the college athletics industry. We are constantly going a mile a minute, putting out fires and dedicating our focus to the student-athletes, coaches, donors and communities we serve. All of this does not leave much time to put effort into ourselves and our own growth. In order to progress and develop, we have to be extremely intentional. In the summer of 2022, I saw the DI-AAA ADA Mentorship Program as an opportunity to be intentional about investing in myself. Upon introduction to the program, I distinctly recall it being presented as a year-long *partnership* which immediately intrigued me because of the reciprocal implication.

Through good fortune, my mentor was Janet Cone, Senior Administrator for University

Enterprises and Director of Athletics at UNC Asheville and current DI-AAA ADA President. We met in person at the NACDA & Affiliates

Convention shortly after we were paired together, which transitioned into a series of meaningful discussions throughout the year ahead. Janet and I scheduled monthly calls with one another. We would arrange them on the calendar, early, and while we had to reschedule at times, we never missed one. Discussions ranged from everything regarding my career, to decisions she makes sitting in 'The Chair,' current issues facing college athletics, similar initiatives we were working on at our institutions, and more. Janet was an open book and I left every meeting feeling reinvigorated about my career, simply from the conversation.

The DI-AAA ADA Officers and Executive Committee were generous enough to provide a travel stipend to mentees to visit their mentor's campus. I strategically selected a date when UNC Asheville was hosting a home competition to experience a gameday and set out from Southwest Florida (with my gloves and coat in hand) in late January. Any time you visit another campus, it's easy to obtain ideas to bring back to your own campus. While I certainly got that from

my visit to UNC Asheville, it also provided an additional layer of value: Through the lens of her athletics leadership team, chancellor, interim provost, and coaches, I got to experience Janet's leadership first-hand. What better way to learn? I left Asheville with pages of notes, but more importantly, an improved sense of what it means to lead by example, be a collaborator, truly inspire, innovate and advocate in today's college athletics landscape.

I signed up for the DI-AAA ADA Mentorship Program to be intentional about my career and better serve the student-athletes, coaches, donors and communities around me. Concluding the mentorship, I am showing up as a better administrator and leader every day while also having built a valued partnership that will last beyond the program itself. Having someone in your corner that you respect, admire and have a genuine professional connection with can inspire continual personal growth and push you to be the best possible version of yourself.

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