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### Foundations to Building Your Personal Brand

Promoting a department's brands and success are extremely important to generating revenue and sponsorship opportunities. Rarely considered is how the messenger's personal brand can influence how information is received.

I work in athletics communications and began my career in the Division II ranks, moved to the Group of Five mid-major level and now work at a Power Five institution at Louisiana State University (LSU). Along my journey, I have learned many things to enhance my personal brand from trial and error, or mentors who have given me feedback.

One of the most impactful lessons I have learned to build my personal brand is the thin slice method.

This method states that people will take a small portion of an interaction – usually non-verbal and within the first five minutes – to draw a conclusion about an individual. The thin slice methodology can sound offensive, but 60 percent of communication is non-verbal so we must consider how we present ourselves to others.

Appearance matters and people associate competence with those that are presentable. It is important that we be ourselves while respecting the dress code of the environment. I first attended the CSC Convention (formerly CoSIDA) as a student in 2015 and distinguished myself from others because of how I dressed. I chose to dress as I had observed other professionals in the field while maintaining my own style and identity. Eight years later, I still consider how my first impression will affect my relationship with others. I have a tremendous amount of respect for my profession and to show that respect, I dress in a manner to elevate the environment in which I work.

The smile is a universal greeting that transcends language and in absence of a smile, someone else will interpret your story. No smile? They are in a bad mood. They aren't paying attention. They don't want to be here. Practice greeting others with a smile, or smiling when you are in the audience of a presentation. Smiling takes too many muscles? Go

minimal and just remove the frown. You want to have a facial expression that looks engaged, attentive and approachable. Be remembered for the joy in your work and how it presents to others.

A strong personal brand can also be defined by expanding your knowledge about departments other than the one you work in, or getting involved and participating in national organizations you are affiliated with. But I believe perfecting the areas that make a difference in the thin slice evaluation is the foundation to building a successful personal brand.



## Diana Camarillo

Wilson Sporting Goods Co.

2022 McLendon Scholar  
2023-24 McLendon Fellow

I became a McLendon Scholar when I received a \$10,000 scholarship in 2022 to assist with my graduate education at the University of Massachusetts. However, what I have gained since then has surpassed any hopes and expectations that I had coming into the program. Once you become a part of the McLendon community, you are constantly surrounded by thought leaders who are invested in you and your success. Your peers become your support system and personal cheer squad as you embark on a year-long development path aimed at getting you into spaces where people like me, like us, have historically been underrepresented. Moreover, this community allows you a comfortable place to challenge yourself and grow under the guidance of some of the most outstanding leaders in sports today.

I can still remember McLendon Leadership Weekend in Kansas, where Fellows and Scholars came together to connect and learn as a cohort. Every single aspect of the weekend was thoughtfully planned out to help us connect with one another and build bonds that would surpass our limited time together. From case studies to museum visits to face time with recruiters at adidas, McLendon leadership set up a weekend full of opportunities for us to apply our skills and knowledge. I had the opportunity to learn from some of the most influential leaders, educators, activists, and personalities in sports and I walked away feeling empowered, seen, cared for, and ready to take what I learned into my last year of graduate school.

As I sit here and reflect on my experience as a McLendon Scholar and on recent news, I acknowledge that there may be people out there who do not fully comprehend the importance of this program so let me share my story with you. I come from a very modest, single-parent household, and my family and I immigrated to this country when I was young and barely spoke English. I am the first in my family to get both an undergraduate degree and more recently a graduate degree. In sports, everyone tells you that you have to network, find mentors, be willing

to take unpaid internships, and be open to moving across the country if necessary. It is true, you must be able to do those things, however, those requirements are harder to fulfill when you do not have access to opportunities that allow you to achieve them. Often, I have felt that I lacked access, connections, and resources to achieve my goal of working in sports and that is why I waited so long before fully pursuing my dream. I worked hard to get to where I am today, but my story is not just one of struggle or achievement, it is one of opportunity. The McLendon Foundation allows people like me to have access to opportunities that I may not have had in the past. It opens doors, builds bridges, and forges connections.

Today, I am the first McLendon Fellow at Wilson Sporting Goods, where I will serve as an operations analyst while receiving mentorship and support from the McLendon community. I am more committed than ever to the promotion and creation of opportunities like the ones I have received and plan to stay engaged with the McLendon Foundation to help with its mission to continue to increase diversity, inclusion and representation in the sports industry.