

N4A

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In the current era of college athletics, the spotlight is often shined on the field and court of play. While many fans and external constituents may understand athletics as fans, facilities, and fundraising, internal units such as athletic training, counseling services, academic services, and compliance officials work tirelessly to provide a holistic student-athlete experience. However, these areas are often overlooked as brands and revenue generators. The intersection of these areas is crucial for supporting staff, acquiring equipment, and keeping pace with the needs of the ever-changing student-athlete.

**Branding: Shaping Perceptions**

It is no secret that many of our students receive and interpret their information from digital platforms. Appropriate branding and marketing are crucial to how internal and external stakeholders perceive these units. The effect of an appealing and well-defined brand that is

instantly associated with academic empowerment, holistic development, and unwavering student support becomes more than just a logo; it becomes a badge of honor for the students, symbolizing dedication to athletics excellence and personal growth. When academic services and development units embrace branding, the transformation instills a sense of pride and ownership for your students as something bigger than just an athlete. As the holistic brand gains recognition and resonance, a shift occurs in the perception of the athletes themselves and what is salient to them.

**Fundraising: Changing Perceptions**

Traditionally, these units were not viewed as revenue generators until the academic unit or academic-based revenue distribution incentives were introduced. However, fundraising efforts can provide financial support to expand services, enhance facilities, and create impactful experiences for our students. By showcasing the return on investment and the tangible impact of the units on student success, potential donors can be inspired to contribute towards a cause that directly influences the overall reputation of the athletics department.

**Impact**

While it may be a daunting and confusing task

for many people who started in the academic services realm, the benefits far exceed the efforts in many ways:

**Staffing and Professional Development:** A well-funded unit can attract, retain, and develop top talent. The ability to fully compensate and train your staff at events such as the N4A Convention directly impacts the well-being of your student-athletes.

**Equipment and Technology:** Technology and e-learning systems are evolving rapidly, accelerating the need for additional technological support for your students. Up-to-date technology systems facilitate personalized education and skill development of your students on and off the field.

**Anticipating Student-Athlete Needs:** The unique challenges of student-athletes are constantly evolving. By generating revenue, our units can adapt and expand their services to address emerging issues such as mental health, DEI initiatives, and career transition support.

In conclusion, branding and fundraising efforts for our units are not simply about generating money but investing in future student-athletes and teams. By understanding the impact of these units on the holistic development of student-athletes, colleges, and universities can take the first step towards creating a culture of athletics academic philanthropy and support.

@NAACConnect

NAAC

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NAAC President

As I grew along my own college athletics professional journey, I often cringed when I heard the 'compliance officer' moniker. To me, this felt like a limiting description that evoked images of individuals lurking in the dark shadows and around corners waiting for an 'I gotcha' moment. And this reputation was confirmed aplenty – by coaches giving the stiff arm and once by a leader who proclaimed we did not seek to win a national championship in compliance. Even early in my career, I felt this view was narrow and misguided, missing an opportunity to leverage expertise to their competitive advantage and of course, protection.

At this critical juncture in college athletics, NAAC's goals serve primarily to equip our membership with the necessary tools to be really good at their jobs, but also to add value as strategic partners and trusted advisors at every level and with all key stakeholders. Foundationally, compliance professionals empower people – coaches, student-athletes, innovative staff – to make good decisions via education, systems, and accountability. In action and with buy-in and partnership, these professionals can also provide strategic thought leadership and yes, shed the shadowy and limited-utility reputation. They can be like Waze or Google Maps ... not simply identifying obstacles and reciting traffic laws, but finding and clearing alternative routes to the desired destination.

We recognize the diversity within the NAAC membership, including, but not limited to experience, size and type of institution or conference, division of competition, resource levels, and educational backgrounds. To effectively carry out our goals for a membership

with such broad interests, we aim to:

- Collaborate with the NCAA and conference offices to create and deliver tools to compliance professionals at all levels and across each of the three divisions that create efficiencies, improve performance, and bridge unnecessary gaps
- Identify opportunities, formal and informal, to participate in and influence governance and legislative outcomes
- Engage members at all stages - early career, middle management, seasoned professionals - and encourage value-add strategies for collaboration and partnership

With so many leaders in college athletics leaning on their own regulatory backgrounds and foundations, we have no shortage of mentors demonstrating the benefits of shifting our perspective. As we see ourselves differently and re-frame our service and value as trusted and sage advisors, I have no doubt others will follow suit.