

# South Dakota State University Department of Athletics

## Statement and Mission on Diversity

Diversity is one of South Dakota State University's important core values. The South Dakota State University Athletics Department recognizes and celebrates the unique opportunities that sports provide by uniting individuals from distinct backgrounds in a common goal. We understand that it is essential to have unity as an integral component for team success, as well as the vital educational value of those with diverse backgrounds, experiences and ideas.

We seek to establish and maintain an inclusive culture that fosters equitable participation for student-athletes as well as career opportunities for coaches, administrators and staff from diverse backgrounds. Diversity and inclusion improve the collaborative learning environment for all student-athletes and provide the benefit of enhancing the opportunity for excellence within our department, our university and our community.

We recognize the importance and prominence of diversity, equity and inclusion not only in the United States, but also in our increasingly globalized society. The current events that we all witness should inspire us to be active participants towards positive change. It is imperative that we work to be better informed and educated about not only the issues, but also the individuals and communities affected. Through our effort to be better stewards of who we are, and those efforts of our fellow citizens, we will be empowered to be that necessary catalyst for all to feel welcome and valued. This is fundamental to the mission of South Dakota State University.

We also recognize that, due to our diverse and broad spectrum of student-athletes, we have the unique opportunity to affect change as we work to develop the next generation of leaders on a college campus, in our local community, our region, our nation and the world. Through sports, we can be an example of how working together towards a common goal can be successfully accomplished with many individuals from a variety of origins, beliefs and life experiences. It is not our differences that hinder us, but rather our differences that strengthen our capacities for compassion, knowledge and progress.

***As one example of these diverse and powerful principles, Nelson Mandela once said, "sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than government in breaking down racial barriers."***

### Goals

- We will ... Ensure that no one is discriminated against based on their race, ethnicity, gender, language, background, physical challenges, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or other protected status.
- We will ... Provide SDSU Athletics administrators, coaches, staff, student-athletes and the campus community with programming, training, workshops and dialogues relative to diversity and inclusion to include race, ethnicity, gender, language, background, physical challenges, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and lifestyle.
- We will ... Collaborate with our campus community as well as the Brookings community to bring about purposeful conversations and dialogues to support the work of diversity and inclusion for our students, student-athletes, administrators, coaches, staff, faculty and community members.

- We will ... Work diligently to embrace the differences that exist between us not as barriers, but as opportunities to learn how we can work better with one another to develop and prepare our student-athletes to enter into and contribute to a global society.
- We will ... Support the ability of our student-athletes and employees to express themselves in accordance with the First Amendment on and off the field.
- We will ... Examine policy, procedure and practices relative to hiring in order to develop recruitment initiatives towards lawfully supporting better representation of diverse candidate pools during the hiring process, and in order to have greater staff diversity across the Athletics Department.

### **Initiatives**

- We will ... Create a Council, comprised of SDSU student-athletes, athletics administrators, coaches and staff to further these principles in cooperation with other South Dakota State University initiatives.
- We will ... Educate and train SDSU athletics department staff and student-athletes on the topics of diversity, inclusion and cultural competence in accordance with the law.
- We will ... Conduct lawful training for our Athletics Department staff and student-athletes annually.
- We will ... Host speakers on the voting process as well as provide voter registration information and resources to encourage student-athletes and staff to vote in elections.
- We will ... Provide student-athletes and staff with flexible scheduling options to vote.
- We will ... Host speakers that share their student-athlete experience and its impact on those from various backgrounds and beliefs.
- We will ... Provide information about resources to address the availability of mental health services and support for student-athletes, coaches and staff.
- We will ... Engage our student-athletes in the campus and Brookings community in activities relative to issues and conversations and in support of diversity, equity and inclusion.