

Tell the Story – Make It Yours!

The Division II tool cards are all about helping members tell their story. Who better than you – the athletics communications director – to be the primary narrator?

Nobody interacts more with student-athletes than you do. Sure, coaches probably do, but only with the student-athletes on their particular teams. Whether your title is athletics communications director, sports information director or some derivative thereof, you're the person with your finger on the pulse of all sports at your university. You understand how special student-athletes are, and you understand the value athletics brings to the university. You have quite a story to tell!

As you interact with media, campus departments, faculty, alumni, community members, and other stakeholders and constituents, don't be shy about using Division II to your advantage in your messaging.

Student-athlete achievement

- ▶ Regardless of the category – academics, community engagement, campus leadership, university ambassadorship – however you rank your student body, student-athletes almost certainly will populate the top tier. You know this firsthand and should advocate that fact to people who may doubt athletics' positive influence on the university as a whole.

Division II attributes

- ▶ **Partial scholarship model** – Students are afforded the chance to be rewarded for their athletic ability. (And we all know the power and satisfaction of being able to say, "I was awarded an athletics scholarship.")
- ▶ **Access to championships** – Of the three divisions, Division II provides the highest access ratio to championships competition.
- ▶ **Academic success** – Student-athletes graduate at rates several percentage points (usually 6-9 points) higher than their general student body counterparts. That gap usually is the widest among the NCAA's three divisions.
- ▶ **Life in the Balance** – Division II students have an excellent opportunity to be highly skilled and highly decorated athletes, but the division's "Life in the Balance" approach allows them to become marketable in their career because they'll have time to focus on their academic pursuits, their grades, their internships, and whatever else it takes to prepare themselves for life after graduation.

For more information about Division II, visit ncaa.org/D2.



“**Student-athletes are often among the best and brightest in the entire student body. Telling their stories helps promote our institutions to an array of local, regional and national audiences.**”

Michael MacEachern
 Assistant Director of Athletics for
 Sports Communications
 Young Harris College

Be Involved!

- ▶ As the keeper of the “front porch” (i.e., the athletics website, statistics, social media, marketing, communications, etc.), it is important for the athletics communications director to be involved in athletics department meetings and strategic planning. Advocate for you to be among the campus communications cadre that discusses strategic campus public relations and media issues.
- ▶ Build and maintain relationships with local media – television, newspaper and radio – and social media outlets. Build relationships with local community groups (e.g., Lions Club, Chamber of Commerce, etc.) to elevate the institution’s athletics events, to engage with a potential fan base, build a better understanding of opportunities for collaboration among community members and create community engagement opportunities for student-athletes.
- ▶ Develop a professional relationship with respective conference colleagues, including the conference communications director. Recommend an annual conference communications meeting, involving all athletics communications directors and the conference communications director.
- ▶ Regularly engage with the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC). As you know, the student-athletes are the story. It is beneficial to interact frequently with the student-athletes to learn about possible feature stories and special events. These stories also will foster connections with other campus constituents.
- ▶ Be a member of the College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA) and attend the annual convention as often as possible.

For more information and resources, visit the “Tools to Tell the DII Story” on the Division II homepage at ncaa.org.

REMEMBER

Athletics communicators help student-athletes make their Division II experience their own by shining the spotlight on their achievements in competition, in the classroom and in the community. Tell their story!

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