

Ideas for SAAC to Further Campus Efforts in the Areas of Inclusion/Identity and Missed Class Time

During its January 2019 meeting, the Division III Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) met with the Division III President and Management Councils. A portion of that meeting was aimed at discussing ways in which SAAC can assist in two key campus areas:

1. Inclusion and identity efforts; and
2. Missed class time.

What follows is a summation of those discussions. These suggestions may assist your campus in furthering its efforts in these important two areas impacting student-athletes.

Topic One: Inclusion and Identity Efforts

Question One: How and when can we best involve student-athlete leaders to foster more inclusive athletics departments and campus communications?

- Find quality leaders to step-up throughout campus. Inclusion must start from the top and work its way down. The campus community as a whole need to be the driving force.
- Publicize this initiative as student-athlete motivated and driven.
- Identify which resources are available and which are lacking. This movement requires resources and a solid structure to be effective.
- Identify strong supportive administrative staff who serve as mentors and ask student-athletes for their opinions and suggestions.
- Guide head coaches in the hiring process to diversify their staff. Student-athletes should additionally be given a voice in the hiring process of assistant coaches.
- Allow student-athletes to participate in the interview process for administrative positions within the athletics department.
- Encourage more spectator attendance and support at athletics events/games/matches. This will foster school spirit, which in turn will promote inclusiveness.
- Create an off-season support system for the student-athletes.
- Promote events that urge both student-athlete and nonstudent-athlete participation.
- Train coaches to develop student-athlete leadership, so they can branch out and serve as leaders on campus and in the greater community.
- Create a better campus-wide awareness and understanding of the purpose of SAAC.

- Create a partnership between the athletics department and campus-wide organizations and initiatives to promote a more inclusive environment across campus.
- Encourage student-athletes to be involved in other areas on campus.
- Implement program in which student-athletes (in uniform) help freshman move-in on the first day of school.
- Use more inclusive language with the help of a “best practices” guide created by the Presidents and Management Councils.
- Incorporate mandatory diversity training for incoming freshmen student-athletes.
- Provide professional development opportunities for staff and host a coaching symposium for the female coaching staff to attend.
- Implement “listening/talking” circles where student-athletes talk and the administration listens.
- Host an “Inclusion Night” within specific teams and/or the entire athletics department.
- Host “Locker Room Talk” – monthly meetings with coaches to discuss topics regarding integrity, diversity and other hot topics. Bring that discussion to SAAC to bring to individual teams.
- Host “Safe Space Training” for administrative staff, faculty and student-athletes.
- Host “One-on-One” small group interactions to better discuss/understand LGBTQ issues.

Question Two: How can we leverage sport, and the positive efforts that Division III and student-athletes are making to help promote...

- A positive identity and appreciation for student-athletes on our campuses:
 - Create a student-athlete specific position on the campus student government board.
 - Create a leadership development program that both student-athletes and nonstudent-athletes can participate in to encourage interaction and collaboration.
 - Promote an understanding that student-athletes are STUDENT-athletes first. They need inclusive engagement and professional development too.
 - Suggest that the SID publicize stories regarding student-athletes’ achievements/efforts off the field, as well as on the field.
 - Promote student-athletes’ Division III identities on social media. Highlight those that are involved on campus, in community service projects, and extra-curricular activities.
 - Fund student-athletes to attend the NCAA Inclusion Forum.

- A more diverse and inclusive campus environment as a whole:
 - Provide mandatory diversity training for freshman student-athletes and reinforce that training each year afterwards.
 - Create a required freshman course that incorporates attendance at diversity-driven extra-curricular activities.
 - Implement a graduation requirement to attend at least one diversity event on campus.
 - Get involved with minority groups on campus and campus-wide events.
 - Use student-athletes as leaders, for example, create a Martin Luther King Day event supported by the athletics department and student-athletes.
 - Integrate student-athletes and nonstudent-athletes in campus housing. This will foster relationships and encourage them to learn from one another.

Topic Two: Missed Class Time

Question One: Are there proactive and positive tool or ideas that student-athletes would be able to help foster in order to limit missed class time?

- Implement a policy to prohibit student-athlete penalization for excused absences.
- Provide professors with a letter at the beginning of the semester that highlights all dates that student-athletes will miss due to competition and discuss the expectations of the student-athletes.
- Urge professors to record lectures so student-athletes can make up any missed classes.
- Encourage communication through meetings between the director of athletics, professors and student-athletes.
- Educate professors on why Division III athletics are important to student-athletes and the institution.
- Provide student-athletes with preferential course enrollment.
- Offer split practices for each team, so student-athletes are able to choose which practices to attend, allowing them to attend the greatest number of classes.
- Utilize a monitoring system to keep track of student-athlete attendance and homework.
- Block off time when classes are not offered during the day.

Question Two: Have you made changes or improvements on your own campus related to missed class time policies/behaviors that others can learn from?

- Encourage faculty and athletics administrators to meet and discuss academic issues.
- Encourage faculty to approve athletics schedules of student-athletes at beginning of the semester.
- Instruct coaches to stress to their team members to attend all class periods outside of their competition days to avoid trust issues between them and the faculty.
- Explain the Division III philosophy and the student-athlete lifestyle as part of new professor training/onboarding.
- Create a working group on campus to guide relationship between the faculty and student-athletes.
- Host a faculty appreciation night hosted by the athletics department.
- Hold a separate “graduation ceremony” for graduating student-athletes that professors are invited to, so they are able to see why the student-athletes schedules are justified.

Question Three: How can you best involve your campus faculty athletics representative (FAR) in developing missed class time policies?

- Create additional FAR positions. Possibly even enough to assign one FAR to each team. This would allow student-athletes to create a better relationship with their FAR.
- Invite the FAR to speak at a student-athlete orientation and introduce the FAR to the entire athletics body as early as possible.
- Encourage the FAR to travel and attend athletics games and practices.
- Choose the FAR specifically on the basis that they are willing to advocate for the students.
- Involve student-athletes in the selection process of the FAR.
- Urge the FAR to review and utilize the NCAA FAR best practices resource.
- Invite the FAR to campus SAAC meetings so they have a better understanding of SAAC’s role.
- Utilize the FAR relationship to mediate conversations between student-athletes and faculty when academic-related issues arise.