NCAA Division III July Diversity Spotlight Recipient

Denison University created a Diversity and Inclusion Athlete Advisory Group (DIG), comprised of representatives from each of its 23 athletic teams. DIG works to make everyone's athletic experience more inclusive and respectful. Denison University started this advisory group because the school has become increasingly diverse over the course of the last decade and the athletic programs reflect the school’s diverse population. Because of the growing diversity, assistant athletics director and head women’s basketball coach Sara Lee developed the concept to create an advisory group, within athletics, to strengthen the understanding of issues associated with diversity. The idea was well received and consequently, the athletics department formed DIG.

The Big Red Diversity and Inclusion Athletic Advisory Group motto is "Celebrating Diversity; Building Teams" and its mission is to work with university administration, faculty representatives, and student-athletes to build a positive athletics environment for all participants. The highest priority is to establish a climate of mutual respect and support of individual differences where persons of different race, creed, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and ethnicity, can maximize their full potential and function as a cohesive group, free of prejudice, discrimination, and harassment.

Their first initiative included a pledge campaign that involved getting as many student-athletes as possible to become a Big Red Ally. To become a Big Red Ally, student-athletes signed a pledge to promote the best of Denison athletics by bringing a message of respect, inclusion, and equality to their athletics community and welcome all persons, regardless of ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and creed.

DIG also instituted a campaign around ceasing to use marginalizing language. By having a variety of student-athletes on posters expressing why they would not use marginalizing language, they provided opportunities for student-athletes to take the lead on this important issue. Student-athletes put these posters all around campus and used them as table tents in the dining halls, in addition to featuring them at the Top 50 banquet.

Click the video link to learn more about DIG.

As a result of the creation of this advisory group and its efforts to make everyone’s athletic experience more inclusive and respectful, Denison University is this month’s recipient of the Diversity Spotlight Initiative.