EVENT BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES
The Upper Midwest Athletic Conference (UMAC) hosted the 2017 Women’s Leadership Symposium on Monday, Nov. 27, 2017, at the University of Northwestern in St. Paul. The event provided a cost-free professional development opportunity for women in the UMAC fostering education and networking to help develop future women leaders who will pursue roles in coaching and athletics administration.

This event developed from a desire from UMAC governance to provide programming to help combat the challenges of hiring diverse coaches and administrative staff across the conference. UMAC staff and conference Senior Woman Administrators (SWAs) created and facilitated an opportunity to begin identifying qualified women already working in the conference and providing them with a foundation for building their careers in athletics.

The following objectives were developed to shape event programming:
- Expose attendees to various opportunities for coaching and administration within intercollegiate athletics
- Empower attendees to intentionally develop a plan for individual and professional growth
- Foster networking and mentoring opportunities among attendees
- Challenge women in UMAC SWA role to develop leadership skills through assistance in facilitation
- Encourage involvement in regional and national professional development opportunities
- Build a list of qualified women to add to UMAC pipeline to enhance diversity in UMAC hiring practices

EVENT SUMMARY AND FEEDBACK
The symposium was an overall success based on anecdotal and survey feedback. There were 60 women who attended with over 25 attendees that are junior and senior UMAC students considering careers in coaching, athletics and sports. The remainder of participants included UMAC administrators (i.e. Assistant ADs, SWAs), head coaches, assistant coaches, volunteer coaches and graduate assistants. Several survey comments about the overall event include:
“I think this was a very powerful, eye opening event, especially for the students that attended. We need to continue doing events such as this in the future.”

“This was something that was super helpful in reminding me as an undergrad-student to keep working to improve myself and to be ready for any opportunities that might come my way.”

PROGRAMMING SUMMARY
Programming included icebreaker and networking activities, keynote address, round table discussion and an expert panel discussion. Details and feedback are below:

- Keynote Address: “Life on the Sidelines,” Betsy Mitchell, Director of Athletics, Physical Education and Recreation at the California Institute of Technology
  - “I liked how she was able to relate to and told it like it is. Betsy did not hide anything, and gave us helpful tips on how to be successful in the athletic administration world. She had some pretty incredible stories that were fun to hear about.”
- Round Table Discussion led by UMAC SWAs (group assignments based on experience level)
  - “LOVED my group - found the depth/maturity of other "senior" administrators and leaders to be helpful and refreshing.”
- Expert Panel including:
  - Kelly Anderson Diercks, Associate Director of Athletics, Augsburg University (NCAA Division III)
  - Renae Hartl, Director of Athletics and Head Softball Coach, Luther College (NCAA Division III)
  - Erin Lind, Commissioner, Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference (NCAA Division II)
  - Julie Manning, Executive Associate Athletics Director, University of Minnesota (NCAA Division I FBS)
    - “Great variety of experience and titles. I think I came away feeling more empowered in the role that I play on our campus.”

CONCLUSION
The UMAC Women’s Leadership Symposium successfully met each of the intended objectives laid out for the event. Throughout the day, attendees were exposed to the variety of career opportunities that exist in intercollegiate athletics and were challenged to reflect throughout the day on their intended career goals and network with other attendees to build a professional network within the UMAC. Attendees were also exposed to the number of opportunities that exist to develop experience and take advantage of local, regional and national professional development opportunities. The UMAC office staff is assessing how similar programming and networking opportunities can be developed and facilitated by the conference in a sustainable, consistent manner that continues to meet conference objectives and strategic goals.

For additional information about this event, please contact:
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