NCAA Division III August Diversity Spotlight Recipient

PLU RISE Northwest Regional Collegiate Training

The Pacific Lutheran University athletic department hosted the first-ever regional collegiate training in collaboration with Ross Initiative in Sports for Equality (RISE), bringing together administrators from colleges throughout the Pacific Northwest to tackle issues of diversity, identity, and inclusion. In addition to coaches and administrators from PLU, the regional event included representatives from Pacific 12 Conference institutions University of Oregon and University of Washington, along with Northwest Conference peers at George Fox University, University of Puget Sound, Willamette University, and the NWC office. "I was excited for PLU to host a RISE training of this kind and that colleagues from around the region and across multiple NCAA divisions were able to join us," said Senior Associate Director of Athletics Jennifer Thomas.

The purpose of the RISE Northwest Regional Collegiate Training was to bring together administrators from around the region to take part in a dynamic training session designed to educate and empower college administrators and coaches, to be leaders in discussing and addressing matters of race, diversity, and social justice within their teams, athletic department, and campus. "The work we did around these topics is important to the student-athlete experience, regardless of which institution students attend, and the resources RISE provided to the group will be extremely valuable to be able to effectively foster and facilitate understanding of differences among people and teams."

The groundwork that led up to the event was over a year in the making. "I was first introduced to RISE programming through a PAC 12 video spotlight on RISE's work with the PAC 12 SAAC in spring 2017 and knew the work they were doing around leadership, diversity, and inclusion was a perfect fit with the mission and values of PLU and our athletics department," said Thomas. "I started trying to connect with RISE to bring the organization to PLU during the summer of 2017, but at that point RISE was fully booked for campus visits for the academic year. I re-approached RISE later with the suggestion that RISE come to PLU for institutional programming and suggested that we could host a regional event. They liked the concept of pairing the two workshops and agreed to come to PLU."

The efforts of Thomas landed RISE on campus for a workshop for 62 Lute student-athletes before PLU administrators and coaches had a workshop of their own the following day. "(Athletic Director) Laurie Turner and I felt that having all of our coaches and administrators attend the workshop and the facilitator training was important to further the mission of the department and university to ensure our department and teams are welcoming and inclusive."

Founded by Miami Dolphins owner Stephen M. Ross in 2015, RISE is a national nonprofit that educates and empowers the sports community to eliminate racial discrimination and champion social justice. Since its inception, RISE has launched initiatives across the country to educate, empower, and support athletes, coaches, and administrators at every level to be leaders in improving racial equality.

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PLU RISE Institutional Workshops