



## Executive Summary

### INTRODUCTION

Family, personal and career success. One's ability to attain, retain, or reestablish success within the current athletics culture, which is often driven by a pressure-to-win and competitive work setting, has become a challenge in recent years. Individuals often operate in a performance-incentive model that constrains personal and family obligations and can jeopardize the retention and inclusion of talented and motivated staff.

Time has become a valuable commodity for all staff members. Today's competitive athletics environment places demands on its employees, that left unchecked, lead to stress, tension, poor health, frequent turnover, and negative budgetary consequences. Creating an institutional environment that values the inclusion and retention of a competent and diverse workforce will require a cultural shift from what has become a 24/7, 365-day athletics commitment.

In May 2005, NCAA President Myles Brand identified the life and work balance issue as a priority for the Association following the Women's Leadership Symposium hosted by the Horizon League. Subsequent discussion on this hot topic occurred at the 2005 NACWAA Annual Meeting and 2006 NCAA Convention. Driven by membership support, Dr. Brand appointed Dr. Carol Cartwright to chair a new Task Force to examine the challenges intercollegiate athletics staff members are facing while addressing the issues of balancing a career and family on their own.

The Life and Work Balance Task Force had its inaugural meeting on August 21, 2006. The Task Force was charged to explore the current athletics culture and develop strategies to engage the membership in actively promoting an intercollegiate athletics environment that fosters an individual's opportunity to integrate life and work obligations.

The group, composed of presidents and chancellors, athletics administrators, coaches, and consultants, reviewed data from the 2006 NCAA Life and Work Balance Inventory and the 2005 Coaching and Gender Equity (CAGE) Project. Laying the groundwork for a paradigm shift, expert consultants presented successful corporate practices that emphasized strategic actions appropriate for the academic and athletics environments. In addition, the consultants presented a framework for establishing a responsive work environment through an integrated approach that addressed balancing life and work commitments.

The Task Force recognized that in order to continue the growth, success, and spirit of intercollegiate athletics, developing an environment that focuses on the people that make it a success is paramount. As a result, the Task Force shifted its focus from life balance as the sole responsibility of the individual to the integration of institutional policies and practices that provide opportunities for individuals to make choices. The group concluded that how athletics staff and their institutions work together facilitates an integrated life balance. The Task Force reached the following conclusions and recommendations which are designed to initiate dialogue and the development of local policies and practices that support successful careers in athletics and promote the retention of talented and motivated staff.

*"We need, and will get, organizational changes not unlike those taking place in the corporate world that allow for more flexibility in the way these demands are met, and enable women (as well as all coaches) to take advantage of their skills, opportunities and contributions, while recognizing that they have a life beyond work."*

Myles Brand, NCAA President, addressing the 2006 NACWAA National Convention.

*"The gender-neutrality component is important. We had as many men talking about these issues as women, all serving different functions in intercollegiate athletics."*

Carol Cartwright, Task Force Chair, Kent State University President, Emeritus.

*"We need to find better ways to support coaches with young families, recognizing the unique logistical challenges of the job, the physical limitations of childbearing, and the spirit of the strict staffing regulations imposed by the NCAA."*

Dena Evans, former Stanford University head coach and all-American student-athlete.

*"Women and men are leaving the field of intercollegiate athletics because they are unable to meet all the demands of being a coach, parent, and spouse or partner. Given the values of family, diversity, and inclusion that are hallmarks of higher education and intercollegiate athletics, it is critical that coaches with young families have a full opportunity to succeed. We need to foster and support a working climate that enables and sustains professional integrity."*

Charlotte F. Westerhaus, NCAA Vice-President for Diversity and Inclusion

## 2006 NCAA Membership Life and Work Balance Survey Findings

- >4,000 respondents.
- 42% reported that they were balancing their current life and athletics commitments effectively.
- 57% were considering leaving athletics or have yet to decide.
- 52% worked more than 55 hours each week.
- 35% believed negative consequences would occur if they temporarily left work for family care issues.
- 20% did not know whether their athletics department offered policies that supported life and work balance commonly found in higher education and the corporate sectors.

## 2005 CAGE Report on Women in Coaching

- 25% less likely to be married than their male counterparts.
- 30% were married, as compared to 55% of other women working full-time.
- 18% raising children as compared to 44% of other women working full-time.
- Women coaching women's sports have declined by 48% since 1972.

*"The biggest challenge is remembering that my team at home – my wife and kids – are my No. 1 priority. The job will take as much as you give and many times just ask for more. You have to know it's OK to say no, so you can say yes more often to your team at home."*

Anonymous NCAA Survey Respondent – Male Administrator

*"Early on in my career, I learned there were a couple of different things from an institutional perspective that needed to be in place for me to be successful. One was that the job description needed to be manageable."*

Stevie Baker-Watson, head athletic trainer and SWA at Aurora University.

## CONCLUSIONS

- *Employees are our biggest investment and most significant asset.* Administrators should set the tone, empowering people to achieve their career goals with their families intact. Traditionally, balancing family and work commitments was considered an issue for female employees. The Task Force emphasized that integrating work with a personal life affects both genders. Members expressed concerns that if the issues are not addressed in a timely fashion, many employees will leave the field of intercollegiate athletics and many more may never enter. Incorporating life balance concepts into formalized hiring and retention policies and practices will shape an inclusive environment and provide clear boundaries for life balance.
- *Balance is defined by the individual rather than the institution.* Life balance is enhanced through choice; choice being individually defined and subsequently facilitated by an institution's campus-wide policy and practice plan. Providing flexibility for individual choice through established policies and practices is an institutional responsibility. Employees should not be forced to take matters into their own hands to establish boundaries. Institutions that build policy connections across campus units, inclusive of athletics, and integrate employee feedback will provide a climate that empowers individuals to make choices.
- *Gender-neutral policies shape an inclusive environment.* Supporting gender-neutral policies within athletic departments across teams for women and men adds value to an inclusive climate. Administrators should value one's output and accommodate the unique circumstances that men and women bring to the profession, rather than expecting the old, one-size-fits-all model to work for everyone (e.g., face time in the office). Supporting explicit, candid, and inclusive discussions about ways to be successful in an athletics environment will facilitate acceptance of a new paradigm.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Sponsor legislation.* The Task Force recommends that the NCAA Executive Committee request the membership to develop functional, legislative changes that provide opportunities for athletics staff to capture more personal time, consequently easing time pressures. The Task Force members proposed the following ideas:
  - Establish effective recruiting boundaries (e.g., reducing the recruiting window calendars, the use of text messaging and email correspondence).
  - Declare one day of the week as a non-athletic activity day for everyone in athletics (e.g., Sundays; any day within seven consecutive calendar days).
  - Establish travel days as a countable athletics activity.
- *Model best practices.* The Task Force recommends that the NCAA national office demonstrate, model and engage in practices that promote the integration of life and work commitments.
- *Communicate best practices.* The Task Force recommends that conference offices take a leadership role in identifying, disseminating and supporting policies and practices that promote the integration of life and work commitments. The group suggests the use of in-person forums to ensure diverse and inclusive representation from member institutions. The Task Force recognizes that a cultural change can not occur without the help of sport governing bodies and key NCAA-affiliated groups.
- *Build campus connections.* The Task Force recommends that athletics departments integrate current campus policies and services. The Task Force recognizes that each individual must evaluate his or her situation and make career and personal decisions based on that evaluation. Individuals should not feel afraid to take advantage of available policies for fear of being seen as non-competitive. Campuses should utilize tools that help individuals identify issues that will allow them to stay committed to their career, establish and define personal boundaries, and achieve an integrated life balance.