Published on Sports Management Resources

Falling Behind in Racial and G...

Bob Frederick, Ed.D.

Deceased

The most recent Racial and Gender Report Card (February 18, 2009) released by the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport shows intercollegiate athletics slipping backwards from previous reports in the hiring practices of African-Americans and women in leadership positions.

“This report documents not only a lack of overall progress in college sport but a decline in both racial and gender hiring practices in key positions,” said Richard Lapchick, director of the institute located at the University of Central Florida.

In Division I men’s basketball, the percentage of head-coach positions held by African-Americans dropped. In 2008, 23% of head coaches were African-American, down two percentage points from the all-time high of 25%, in 2006. (Additional data at the bottom of this article)

“This is the worst report card for college sport in many years,” Lapchick said.

Coincidentally, two days later an Op-Ed piece appeared in the New York Times written by Tony Dungy

titled “Diversity Everywhere but the Sidelines.” The just retired coach of the Indianapolis Colts lamented the fact that so much progress has been made in the NFL in the hiring of African-American head coaches yet only seven of 120 NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision teams had black coaches.

Dungy said, “You wouldn’t think that in 2009 it would be more likely for an African-American to become president of the United States than to be hired as head coach of a top-20 football program. But that seems to be the case.” (New York Times, February 20, 2009)

In the current environment there seem be two factors that may exacerbate this backsliding on minority hiring practices in intercollegiate athletics and that is discouraging news for the future. The first is a recent trend of FBS institutions setting up a succession for the replacement of the head coach several years in advance of his retirement. The institution makes a public announcement of the head coach designate and his new salary in the interim. This procedure completely eliminates the open search process and denies minority candidates a chance to be interviewed. The rationale is advanced by the university that the top-rate assistant coach might be hired by another institution and it doesn’t want to lose him. This practice seems to be increasing in the last few years and it clearly limits opportunities for minority coaching candidates.

A second factor that is linked to the first is the influence of wealthy alumni donors who demand of presidents and chancellors that “we hire a coaching candidate who is acceptable to the alumni base.” Obviously, this could be the underlying reason for setting up the succession plan.

How do we deal with these problems? Like most of our issues in intercollegiate athletics the solution starts at the top. The presidents and chancellors of our FBS institutions must take courageous stands about ensuring open and honest hiring processes that include qualified minority candidates. Secondly, the NCAA needs to consider some version of the NFL’s “Rooney Rule” which requires that at least one minority candidate be interviewed for every head coaching job. The NCAA does not like to get involved in institutional matters such as the hiring process but some “push” on this issue is desperately needed.

Our nation’s colleges and universities should be taking a strong leadership role in advancing opportunities for women and minorities in leadership positions in intercollegiate athletics simply because it is the right thing to do. As has been said here before, to do any less is unacceptable.

Below are some of the data from the Racial and Gender Report Card:

Athletics Directors

- Whites held the overwhelming percentage of AD positions in all three divisions at 90.0%, 92.0%, and 97.0% in D1-2-3, respectively.
- African-Americans held 7.2%, 3.8% and 1.8% respectively in Divisions 1-2-3.

Senior Associates/Associates/Assistant ADs

- At the associate athletic director position, whites comprised 89.2%, 88.8%, and 96.4% of the total population at D1-2-3 respectively.
- The percentage of women filling associate athletic director positions was 27.9% in D1, 40.3% in D2 and 50.8% in D3.

Coaches

- Whites dominate the head coaching ranks on men's teams holding 89.2%, 88.7% and 92.5% of all head coaching positions in D1-2-3, respectively.
- African-Americans held 7.2%, 5.3% and 4.0% of the men's head coaching positions in the three NCAA divisions, respectively.

Men's teams

- In men's D1 basketball, 22.9% of all head coaches were African-American, which was down 2.3% from the all-time high percentage of 25.2 in 2005-06.
- Only three of 120 D1-A head football coaches were African-American during the 2007 collegiate season compared to six African-Americans in 2008.

Women's teams

- Women head coaches in D1 basketball stayed virtually the same (64.7% in 2007-08 and 64.3% in 2005-06).
- African-American women held 10.7% and African-American men held 2.9% of women's head coaching positions in D1 basketball.

At the website of the National Consortium for Academics and Sports (NCAS) the Racial and Gender Report Card report can be accessed in its entirety. Click here.

(Click on "Library" at the top of the page to find articles about minority recruitment programs.)

Source URL: https://sportsmanagementresources.com/index.php/print/pdf/node/121