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Q: What role should the athletics policy board play in advancing diversity?

A: In higher education, an athletics policy board, usually named the Intercollegiate Athletics Council, consisting of faculty, administrators and alumni from outside the athletics department is often a governance association requirement. Even if it isn't, having an objective, majority faculty oversight board in place to annually review key diversity performance indicators and to be involved and invested in the achievement of diversity objectives is very beneficial. Consideration should be given to establishing a goal for this group to be 40-60% minority (female and non-white), because it should play a major diversity leadership role and it is easier to affect the minority composition of appointed committees immediately as opposed to staff positions. A committee that is majority female and non-white will be more likely to attend to diversity program initiatives.

The athletics director should consider creating an employment sub-committee of the athletics policy board that consists of three faculty/alumni/administrator members, again with a majority of persons of color/female, as a standing "search" committee to assist in filling all department position openings. The search committee would meet with each athletics department employees responsible for hiring whenever a position becomes open to: (1) review that unit's diversity assessment report, (2) review the job advertising plan and minority prospect list, (3) make suggestions regarding increasing the minority applicant pool, and (4) participate in the interview process with finalists. The athletics department should embrace a policy requiring that every pool of finalists for open positions include at least one minority applicant, that all finalists participate in formal face-to-face or telephone interviews, and that the athletics director or his designee participate in finalist interviews.

A faculty academic affairs sub-committee of the athletics policy board should also be established, consisting of three members who should be responsible for meeting with each head coach at the end of each academic year to: (1) review the academic progress of all athletes, (2) review the academic credentials of all incoming recruits, (3) review the respective team's diversity assessment report, and (4) offer assistance to the head coach in creating a faculty/staff mentoring and support system for each minority student-athlete on the team. The faculty members involved in such support structures should also be used to assist the head coach in recruiting when minority prospects are on campus visits. This faculty sub-committee should also be responsible for reviewing the credentials of and making recommendations to the director of admissions for prospective students with below average admissions records.

Another primary responsibility of the athletics policy board would be to review annual department diversity reports on student-athletes, coaches, and staff in formats similar to those previously recommended and to do so in consultation with the athletics director. Student-athlete diversity should be examined by sport in meetings with each head coach, with the athletics policy board, asking how board members could be of assistance in increasing these numbers.

EXCERPTS FROM PREPUBLICATION MANUSCRIPT

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