We’re All In
A culture of care in athletics

DII APPLE Conferences 2019

Dr. Jeffrey J. Milroy
To improve the **health and wellness** of all athletes through the translation of prevention research to **effective programs, policies, and practices.**

http://athletewellness.uncg.edu
Today’s Game Plan

• Defining a “culture of care” in athletics
• Reflect on your athletic department’s current culture
• Assessment
• Brainstorming strategies
• Developing an action plan for your campus
What personal and professional motivation drove you to choose this session?
Maintain the status quo
or
Challenge yourself to be better
Reflect on your current athletics culture

- Does every member of the athletics department:
  - believe they are valued regardless of sport-based indicators of success (e.g., wins, external recognition, draft picks)?
  - know that they will receive support if they are struggling with drug or alcohol use?
  - trust that they will receive support if they report victimization?
- Does current policy communicate a desire to help or a requirement to punish?
- Do individuals of minority trust that concerns about discrimination will be taken seriously?
- Do members of your athletics community have the knowledge and skills to develop an athletics culture that is strictly based on empathy, intentionality, and empowerment?

Is this all communicated regularly and consistently?
empowerment

/noun
authority or power given to someone to do something.
"Individuals are given empowerment to create their own dwellings"
- the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights.

in·ten·tion·al·i·ty

/noun
the fact of being deliberate or purposive.

- philosophy
the quality of mental states (e.g., thoughts, beliefs, desires, hopes) that consists in their being directed toward some object or state of affairs.

em·pa·thy

/noun
the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.
synonyms: affinity with, rapport with, sympathy with, understanding of, sensitivity toward, sensibility to, identification with, awareness of, fellowship with, fellow feeling for, like-mindedness, togetherness, closeness to; informal chemistry
What is a culture of care in athletics?

What type of environment sets you up for success?
When are you at your most successful?
A culture of care requires leadership

- Student-Athlete
- Coaches & Athletic Staff
- Administrators
Benefits of a culture of care within athletics

**Individual**
- Security – to feel safe
- Belonging – to feel part of things
- Continuity – to experience connection
- Purpose – to have a goal to aspire to
- Achievement – to make progress toward goals
- Significance – to feel that you matter as a person

**Relational**
- Mentorship
- Nurturing

**Managerial/Organizational**
- Respectful
- Balanced
- Mindful Attention
Strategies for developing a culture of care within athletics
What's the solution?
Reflect on your current athletics culture

- Does every member of the athletics department:
  - believe they are valued regardless of sport-based indicators of success (e.g., wins, external recognition, draft picks)? Revise job descriptions/responsibilities and annual review materials
  - know that they will receive support if they are struggling with drug or alcohol use? Train athletics staff in mental health/substance abuse literacy and standardize referral processes
  - trust that they will receive support if they report victimization? Mandate coach training in skills re: responding to sexual violence (e.g., Coaches Assist)
- Does current policy communicate a desire to help or a requirement to punish? Revise sanctions to prioritize rehabilitation over punishment
- Do individuals of minority trust that concerns about discrimination will be taken seriously? Hold a forum to discuss power, discrimination, alliance, and the departments role.
- Do members of your athletics community have the knowledge and skills to develop an athletics culture that is strictly based on empathy, intentionality, and empowerment? Budget money for continuing education in areas of specific need (e.g., mentorship, communication)
# Culture of Care Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most members of the athletics community at my school...</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...are deeply interested in listening to others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...care about all dimensions, people, stakeholders, aspects of a given situation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...support others whether we are winning or losing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...help others actualize and grow</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...do not view others as commodities to be used and discarded</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...respond rather than react</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Culture of Care Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflect on your own</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am deeply interested in listening to others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I care about all dimensions, people, stakeholders, aspects of a given situation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</table>
Best practices to develop a culture of care

• Find out how you and athletics department match up to what the definition of culture of care is at present time (again and again)

• Look for resources (they’re all over the place)
  • NCAA tool kits
  • NCAA SSI Coaches Assist for Empathic Communication
  • IPAHW

• Be intentional and promote what the definition of culture of care really is (don’t make it up)
  • Individual
  • Relational
  • Managerial
Action Plan Brainstorming

1. What change would help you prioritize a culture change in your athletics dept?
2. Why is this change important for the entire athletics community?
3. Whose voices will enhance your perspective on this issue?
4. Who will help you advocate for this change?
5. What will you do first?
6. How will you ensure you do not lose steam?
7. When will you be satisfied?
Shameless Plug: *Interested Graduate Students*