

# CoSIDA

Strategic Communicators for College Athletics

## CoSIDA | CORNER

### A LOOK BACK AT THE 2010 CoSIDA CONVENTION

The fall semester has started. Students are back populating our campuses, and the smell of barbecues fills the air during football tailgates. With that said, I would like to use my first column as CoSIDA President to revisit one of the best conventions in our organization's 54-year history.



Larry Dougherty

One could not ask for a better site than San Francisco, a fabulous city with many things to do. For the CoSIDA members, however, it was inside the Marriott Marquis that held the main attractions.



The convention was divided into three theme days, and who better to kick-start the first day, titled Best Practices, than one of the top panelists in CoSIDA history, Dr. Don Ranly, professor emeritus from Missouri's School of Journalism. With "Writing for the Web" as the topic of his three-hour mini-seminar, the cagey orator worked his magic on the audience with the packed room focused on his every syllable. Even veterans such as CoSIDA Past Presidents Nick Joos of Baylor and Bill Little of Texas were taking notes like students preparing for a final exam.

The afternoon panels featured an assortment of topics, ranging from Credentialing Issues to Defining Sportswriters, all of which dealt with topics that touch on the day-to-day life of today's athletics communication professional.

Strategic Communications was the theme for day two, and the lineup was packed with all-star talent. Former White House spokesman Ari Fleischer opened the day, joining BCS Executive Director Bill Hancock on a panel aptly named "The BCS and You." Following a Reputation Management panel presented by Bonnie Caver of Caver Public Relations. Another former White House communications staffer, Ben Porritt, delivered an hour-long speech on crisis communications. Porritt, who has worked on various crises in sports as well as politics, hammered home the point that "speed and transparency" are the keys on how to deal with a crisis from a communications perspective.

Fleischer, who left the political spotlight to start his own firm, Ari Fleischer Sports Communications, then took center stage. First, the charismatic media strategist regaled the more than 500 attendees at the CoSIDA Awards Luncheon with his personal history in the field. Then, he captivated the audience with a presentation on Strategic Messaging that left a buzz in the air for the rest of the week.

As if that was not enough, the NCAA, which has been a tremendous partner of CoSIDA in recent years, followed with a Strategic Communications Panel hosted by its Director of Public and Media Relations Erik Christianson. That was followed by divisional breakout sessions with Mike Racy, Vice President of Division II and Dan Dutcher, Vice President of Division III, on the panels of their respective organizations.

The CoSIDA Hall of Fame Gala was the marquee social event of the Convention. In this newly adopted format, the CoSIDA Hall of Fame and Academic All-America Hall of Fame classes were introduced by

ESPN personality Ron Franklin. I never tire of hearing the acceptance speeches from my colleagues in the profession and watching individuals that are always behind the scenes finally get their moment in the spotlight. I also get chills when I hear Academic All-America Hall of Famers like Dewey Selmon of Oklahoma thank Debbie Copp, OU's Director of Publications, in his speech and say how much this award, and everything it stands for, means to him.

Digital Summit Day, which served as the finale, was geared toward the future of athletics communications. Here, the Convention heard from television executives from ESPN and CBS College Sports, as well as the founder of ESPN, Bill Rasmussen, on where the industry is heading. Two of our finest, CoSIDA 2nd Vice President Joe Hornstein of UCF and Dr. Bill Smith of Arkansas, along with Ronnie Ramos, NCAA Managing Director of New Media Strategies, delivered an incredible presentation on how "we" are becoming the media.

Immediately following was a social networking panel, hosted by David Perry & Associates, that featured CoSIDA expert Chris Syme of Montana State and the esteemed Malcolm Moran, Penn State's Knight Chair in Sports Journalism and Society.

While most of our organization broke for lunch, a group of 20 volunteers, under the direction of Sam Atkinson of Gallaudet, donated their time to help others, working in the soup kitchen at the nearby St. Anthony's Foundation. The night before, our Young CoSIDA members orchestrated a charity raffle with the proceeds donated to St. Anthony's. The results of these efforts contributed 400 items and more than \$500 to the good people of St. Anthony's.

The Convention closed with a Best Practices panel that was followed by mini-breakout sessions on everything from video production and editing, to Twitter, QR codes and Foursquare. It never ceases to amaze me how technology seems to change overnight. Thankfully, we have some quality individuals in our profession to instruct us on how to best utilize these new products/systems to enhance our ability to better perform our jobs. I would like to extend a special thanks to Jamie Weir of Michigan State and Mark Fratto of St. John's (New York) who worked to coordinate the final day.

My goal as we go forward through the 2010-11 academic year is to continue this type of professional development, as we have in the past, through timely and informative webinars on our newly redesigned CoSIDA.com website. I strongly encourage athletics directors at every level to make every effort to have your communications staffs attend the 2011 CoSIDA Convention in Marco Island. It has clearly become the best convention for communications-based practitioners in terms of professional development in college athletics, and continues to raise the bar each year. When it comes to the exchange of communications ideas, concepts and strategies there is no better place to be than the annual CoSIDA Convention.

Larry Dougherty is the associate athletics director for athletics communications at Temple and was recently elected as the 2010-11 CoSIDA President.