

FINDING STUDENTS AND EVALUATING THEM



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FROM SID Kevin Ruple: For many years, I have told many other sports information directors that I am the luckiest SID at the small college level, and that I get the most and best support at that level.

It is key for you as an SID to make the powers-to-be at your institution (ie..athletic director, development director, president) know and understand that you can play a large and important role in helping to educate students.

Everyday, the SID writes, creates and communicates the good news about your institution. Having student assistants, graduate assistants and interns who believe in the quality of your institution and having them working for and speaking on behalf of your institution will tell members of the media volumes about your school and its quality.

I my 19 years at Baldwin-Wallace, we (the college and I) have helped to produce 14 other SIDs as well as many other graduates who believe in B-W's motto: "A Quality Education With A Personal Touch".

Question: How do we do it?

Answer: We do it as a team.

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The old addage about being a good coach also applies to the Sports Information Director.

*** Talented players make great coaches.

*** The coach is only as good as the playyers on his or her team.

To be a good SID, you must surround yourself with good people

*** As a Division I SID, in most cases, you have an assitant or two or more. You usually have either a graduate assitant and/or an intern. Then comes your student staff.

*** At the Division II, III or NAIA levels, the SID must rely on students. The SID might be lucky enough to have an assistant or a G.A. or an intern.

Question: How do you find good students?

Answer: Many ways.

* Have your current student assistants (the good...reliable ones) identify them.

* Use, if you have them, your sport management/administration, journalism/English, communication/broadcasting,health and physical education departments to your advantage.

* Use your career services office.

AN ANALOGY: *At Baldwin-Wallace, we had a program called Work-Study Plus. The program was designed during the prior to the school year. Incoming freshman would come to pre-register for fall classes. If they had government assisted Work-Study and wanted to work, they attended a session designed to describe possible employment. First, the Financial Aid department talked about Work-Study and how it is an integral part of their aid package. Then, each campus department sent a representative to talk about the jobs they have available. If an incoming student was interested in your program, he or she would then attend a one hour "shadow session" that afternoon.*

* Field experience and internships. Many students need the experience as criterion for class credit toward graduation. Again, the theory of the SID being a teacher is true.

Question: How did this program help?

Answer: It gave both the prospective student and the SID an opportunity to talk and to see if they would be able to work together.

My feeling is this. If the prospective student comes to campus in the summer to register early, it shows initiative. If the student attends the Work-Study Plus session, it shows initiative again. If that student comes to "shadow", it again shows initiative. I tell them when they leave that day, "If you liked what you heard today during the shadow session, and you come and see me that first week of school about a job, I will hire you."

When I became an intern at the College of Wooster in the fall of 1978, the Director of News Services, George Richard, told me this: "You only get out of a student assistant or intern what you ask of them. If you ask a little, you will get a little. If you ask a lot of them, you generally will get a better assistant." It is a true statement.

*** challenge them.

*** stimulate thought.

*** make them do research.

*** show them you will roll up your shirt sleeves and go to work/"war" with them.

Question: How do you evaluate your students?

Answer: Very carefully. Only on rare occasions have I ever had to ask a student assistant to leave my staff. Generally, if they leave, it is on their own accord. They realize that sports information was not for them.

Question: Why are you as important to your institution as a professor/ educator ?

Answer: As an SID, you have to show the powers-to-be the value of the experience that each student will receive while working in the SID office. Every SID is a teacher, and most of them are good teachers. You can offer virtually any student on your campus a way to better themselves and earn their Work-Study money, gain credit or move forward in their career quest.

ANOTHER B-W ANALOGY: *Once, about 10 or 12 years ago, I had a student assistant who had very little interest in sport and was a pre-engineering student. How did we work with him ? He worked for one full year on developing procedures for me. He developed an A to Z manual on how to do a given office task. How to send a press release. How to label a photograph. What to do following a soccer game or football game or track meet. How to proofread a media guide or a recruiting brochure or a game program. What to do in case of an emergency.*

BACK TO EVALUATING THE STUDENT

How do I evaluate the progress of the student assistants in my office ? Very carefully ! The answer is simple. I do it by using the TEAM concept.

As Sports Information Directors, we work with players and coaches all the time. So why would the thought or theory of working as a team be surprising?

Again, as an SID/teacher, you must challenge and stimulate your graduate assistants, interns and / or student assistants.

Even though I am at a Division III school, I use/work with my student assistants like I would with a teammate/player if I were a coach. We have a chain of command.

I am the coach. They are my players. We both work toward a common goal -- seven days-a -week for three seasons per year plus the summer.

*** They write. I edit.

*** They design. I edit

*** They layout. I edit.

*** They compile the statistics. I balance them.

*** They call the media. I follow-up.

*** They prepare the Internet. I edit and post.

You must develop a staff that relies on its juniors and seniors for leadership. Let this group help you with mentoring your freshman and sophomores. Good role models are a BIG key. If your students can see the value in your system (ie...better writing skills, better internship opportunities after graduation and better interviewing skills because of increased communication skills), they will want to learn and develop.

ANOTHER B-W ANALOGY: *At B-W, we ask the juniors and seniors who have shown ability to be Crew Chiefs. It helps them to take ownership of both the program and the younger students in it. If taught correctly and mentored properly, most seniors want to be a Crew Chief. They take the responsibility seriously. The freshmen, sophomores and juniors who aspire to be a crew chief (a goal-setting opportunity), work harder. It makes it easier for you as the SID to evaluate their performance and progress through the program.*

Many of my students leave after one, two or three years because they have either gone as far with the program as they wanted or were able to get a better job or internship in an area that was closer to their future career track. In most cases, we were able to help move them in that direction. Maybe 20- to-25 percent of my student assistants want to be an SID. And, only about one in every 20 actually ends up in the profession.

The Players on Your Team

THE CREW CHIEF: Crew Chiefs receive a sport much the same as a graduate assistant or an intern at the larger schools. They work with the SID. They work with their staff (fellow students) to accomplish a team goal, such as statistics at a basketball game, doing the typesetting, preliminary layout and design of a game program or media guide as well as many other duties as assigned.

THE TEAMMATES: Each Crew Chief receives other student assistants to utilize in accomplishing a common goal. He or she reports back to the SID on progress. It is great two-way communication.

IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS: The Crew Chief gains responsibility. The teammates gain a sense of the chain of command. Each Crew Chief, with the help of the SID, identifies younger students who have the ability to be future Crew Chiefs. Everyone learns from one another. The system perpetuates itself. If you don't want to continue, you move on. If you want to be a Crew Chief, you have the opportunity. If you want to be an SID.....great. If not, you have gained experience and knowledge that will help you in any endeavor you choose. **IT IS REAL, HANDS-ON, DAY-TO-DAY LEARNING. IT IS AN EDUCATION IN SPORTS INFORMATION.**

Question: What are the benefits to the SID?

Answer: Many.

- *** The SID can concentrate more on the major/high profile sports and projects.
- *** The coach and student-athletes have a conduit to the SID office.
- *** The SID will be less stressed both on the job and at home.
- *** The SID will be more healthy and ultimately more productive.

OVERALL, WHO ELSE BENEFITS FROM THIS PROGRAM ?

- *** The sport. It gets added exposure.
- *** The coach. He or she gets day-to-day contact with the SID Office.
- *** The student-athletes and the Athletic Department. They have a conduit with the sports information office.
The SID cannot be everywhere all of the time.
- *** The Sports Information Director and Office of Sports Information. It is able to cover all sports equally.
- *** The institution and its athletics and public relations efforts are increased.
- *** The Development/ Fund Raising Office benefits in the long-term by having students who feel they have received "A Quality Education With A Personal Touch". Studies will tell you that these folks give more back to the College in later years.
- *** The current alumns and friends of your college or university who are interested in athletics are better able to follow their favorite team.
- *** The media. It always has the latest and most up-to-date information and a way of finding out what they need to know in a timely manner.