



2016-2020 INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS REVIEW

NIU ATHLETICS

Introduction

Dear Huskies,

It is an understatement to say that over the past year, as a country, a University and as individuals, we have faced unprecedented challenges. Through a global pandemic which severely impacted our sports programs and left students and staff working from home, I saw the people of Northern Illinois University, and especially the supporters of NIU Athletics, step up.

Over the past five years, NIU Athletics has seen tremendous growth. While this document will outline many of these accomplishments, I would like to take a moment to highlight our department's focus on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. I firmly believe that as a department, we have demonstrated leadership and have provided support and education on these important issues to our student-athletes and staff. We will continue to work proactively with our University to move our student-athletes, staff and community forward.



Academically and athletically, Huskie student-athletes have proven time and again their pursuit of excellence. This year, despite having their worlds upended, playing seasons altered, and classes moved to remote learning, the student-athletes have continued to shine. This document will show not only the perseverance of our student-athletes this year, but their numerous achievements in the classroom and competition during my time as Director of Athletics. I could not be more proud of their effort and their resolve.

In addition to efforts mentioned above, you will also find enclosed detailed information on the successes NIU Athletics has seen in areas of revenue generation and campus and community engagement.

As I reflect on my time I can say, without a doubt, that I am truly humbled and blessed to be a part of such an amazing University and department. While I know there will be challenges ahead, I have confidence in our collective ability to continue to move the agenda forward with the collaboration and hard work from our campus partners, colleagues, community, staff, and YOU our most ardent supporters. I am extremely proud of the things we have accomplished together and will continue to do in the future!

I appreciate you taking the time to review the results of a lot of hard work and dedication by many within our programs over the last five years, and very much look forward to your continued support in the months and years ahead.

Thank you and Go Huskies!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean T. Frazier". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Sean T. Frazier
Associate Vice President/Director of Athletics

Athletics Strategic Plan

ATHLETIC VISION STATEMENT

THE VISION OF NIU ATHLETICS IS TO BE A NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED NCAA DIVISION I PROGRAM THAT WINS CHAMPIONSHIPS AND GRADUATES STUDENT-ATHLETES WITH INTEGRITY WHILE ENGAGING A DIVERSE COMMUNITY.

The 2018-21 Strategic Plan is the second three-year plan completed under Associate Vice-President & Director of Athletics, Sean T. Frazier, and demonstrates the University's goals of strategic focus to create a multi-year plan with immediate and long term objectives.

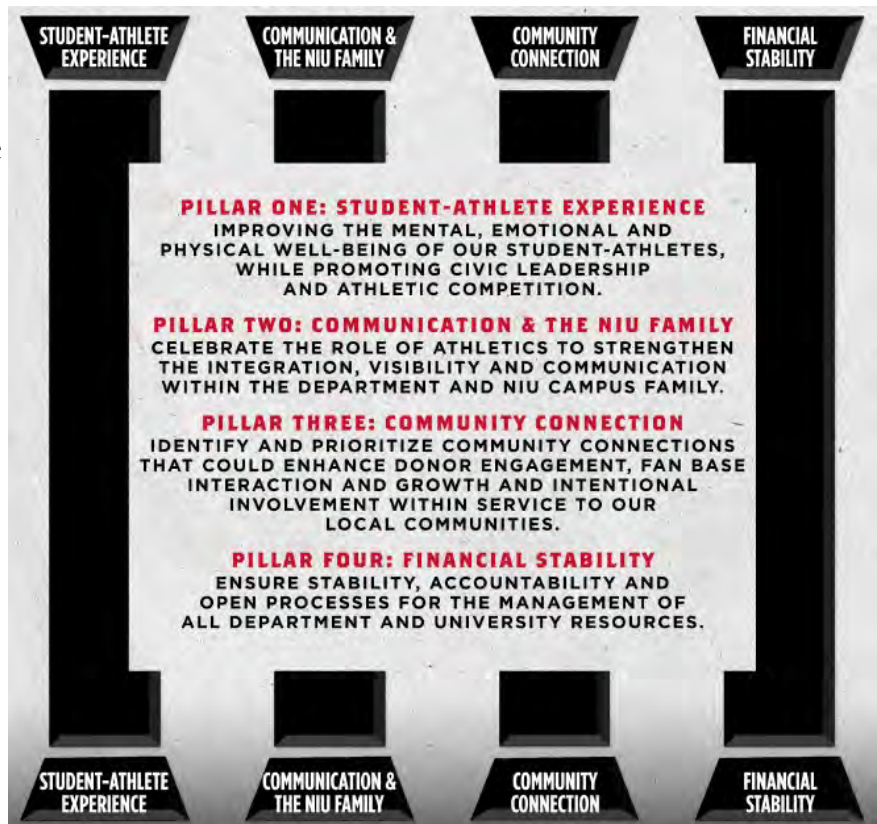
The plan retains the original Athletics Vision Statement of being a nationally-recognized NCAA Division I program that wins championships and graduates student-athletes with integrity while engaging a diverse community.

Four "pillars" provide the essential platform for the Strategic Plan:

- Student-Athlete Experience
- Communication & the NIU Family
- Community Connection
- Financial Stability

Specific goals and objectives are detailed under each pillar, and will be used as benchmarks throughout the life of the plan.

The new Strategic Plan also introduces **"The Huskie P.A.C. - Promoting Athletes to Champions"** which is defined as the integration of academic, athletic and civic leadership.



ATHLETIC VISION STATEMENT

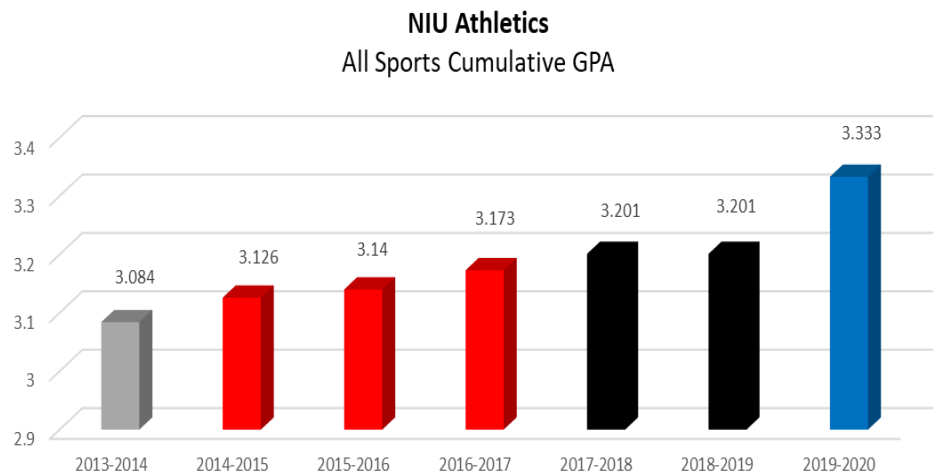
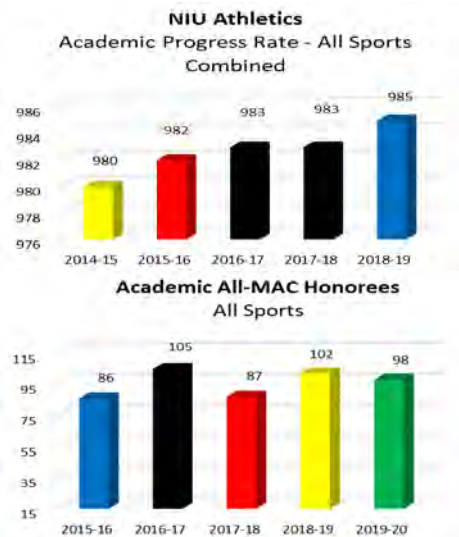
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Academic Achievements

Raising Success in the Classroom

Since Frazier's hire in 2013, Huskie student-athletes have not only shown success in competition, but in the classroom. *Academic excellence and innovation are core to the University's mission and goals.*

The emphasis on academic excellence has extended throughout the department. **For the third straight year, NIU student-athletes maintained a cumulative grade point average of 3.2 or higher, with an all-time high of 3.33 at the end of the 2019-20 academic year, with 15 teams achieving a team GPA of 3.0 or higher in either the fall or spring semesters.** Every NIU sports program surpassed the Academic Progress Rate for the 12th straight year, and the Graduation Success Rate (GSR) of 88 percent once again ranked above the national average.



Over the course of Frazier's time at NIU, **Huskie student-athletes representing six different sports have been named Academic All-Americans by the College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA) ten times since 2013-14.** In 2019-20 Jane Maertins from men's soccer received the honor, and in 2018-19 three NIU student-athletes, Jenny Van Geertry (softball), Mikayla Voigt (women's basketball) and Max Scharping (football), were honored. Scharping was also a finalist for the National Football Foundation's William V. Campbell Trophy, the "Academic Heisman", in 2018 and was honored in New York City as one of 16 NFF National Scholar Athletes.

NIU Athletics has also produced multiple All-Americans under Frazier's watch, including the first two in Huskies women's track and field history with Hope Schmelzle and Jehvania Whyte in 2018. Football defensive end Sutton Smith became the first Huskie to earn first team All-America honors in back-to-back seasons, including achieving consensus All-America status in 2017.



Athletic Achievements



Making Champions

Competitively, the Huskies have made great strides under Frazier. In 2019 the Huskies won a Mid-American Conference West Division title in men's basketball, their first division title since 2006. The Huskies have also welcomed individual MAC title winners, most recently Ashley Tutt, who became the first NIU runner to win the MAC women's cross country championship in 2019 and added three MAC titles at the 2021 Indoor Track & Field Championships, and Brit Wilson, the individual MAC Wrestling Champion at 184 pounds in both 2020 and 2021.

On top of individual successes, the Huskies also added two more Mid-American Conference Championship titles this past academic year with victories by both women's cross country and women's indoor track and field.

Titles by year:

- ✿ 2013-14 – Men's tennis
- ✿ 2014-15 – Men's tennis and football
- ✿ 2015-16 – Women's volleyball
- ✿ 2016-17 – Women's volleyball (regular & tournament)
- ✿ 2018-19 – Football and women's gymnastics
- ✿ 2020-21 – Women's cross country and women's indoor track & field

This brings the Huskies' MAC title total to ten under Frazier, the most MAC Championship titles won under the leadership of any athletic administration in NIU history!

Men's and women's basketball have also both broken postseason droughts during Frazier's tenure, with men's basketball making its first postseason appearance in 20 years in 2016, while the women's team earned a bid to the WNIT Tournament in 2017.

Competitive success promotes the University's goal to provide prospective students/donors outcome-related content to aid in recruitment and retention.



Athletic Achievements

Program First

For the first time in program history, Northern Illinois University was honored with the 2017 Jacoby Trophy, which is presented to the top women's athletic program in the Mid-American Conference. NIU, which competes in 10 women's sports, **saw nine of its ten women's sport programs finish in the top half of the MAC during either regular season or tournament play.** Additions of such accolades support the University's goal to reinforce brand identity and provide clear recruitment value to prospective students and potential partners and donors.



The Jacoby Trophy honors annually the top MAC women's athletic program.

The Jacoby Trophy is named after former MAC Commissioner Fred Jacoby. Jacoby was the MAC Commissioner from 1971-82 and is credited with incorporating women's athletics into the conference structure. For the Jacoby Trophy, points are awarded based on each school's finish, with the overall total divided by the number of sports sponsored by each school.

A graphic celebrating the 2016-17 Jacoby Trophy win. It features the text '2016-17 JACOBY TROPHY TOP WOMEN'S ATHLETICS PROGRAM IN THE NIU' in white and red. To the right is a large image of the trophy. Below the text are ten circular portraits of athletes, each with their name and sport listed underneath: Lisa Carlsen (Basketball), Ray Gooden (Volleyball), Kim Kester (Golf), Tanya Manifu (Tennis), Sam Morreale (Gymnastics), Adrian Myers (Cross Country), John Ross (Soccer), Christina Sutcliffe (Softball), and Connie Teaberry (Track and Field). The MAC logo is also present.

Three years ago, our department came together and developed our strategic plan. This process was comprehensive, but also goal specific. One of the major desired outcomes of our plan is to be more competitive and to win championships in all our 17 sport programs. *With this recognition, we have achieved a department first and a significant milestone.* I'm extremely proud and humbled to be a part of this NIU historic accomplishment [...] – Sean T. Frazier

Campus Connection

Enhancing the Campus and Community

Throughout his time at NIU, Frazier has worked to engage the campus and local communities, *supporting the University's goal of strengthening partnerships and making public engagement opportunities more accessible to faculty, staff and students.* By expanding the Huskies' fan base and connecting with alumni, strengthening the Huskies' foothold in Chicagoland by bringing home football games to the city where more than 150,000 living alumni reside, and instituting the Huskie Fan Advisory Board to seek ideas and opinions on how to improve the fan experience, Frazier continues to enhance campus and community connections.



Athletics' contributions to student life and recruitment include involvement with and support of events and programs like Jobs Plus, Homecoming, Welcome Week, Orientations, Open Houses and Admitted Students Days. From Admissions to Military Science, Student Involvement, Campus Dining, Academic Affairs and the NIU Alumni Association, collaborations with campus partners **reinforce Frazier's commitment to moving NIU forward.**

Athletics also provides numerous opportunities to students to advance their academic pursuits – from athletic training, to nutrition and dietetics, to sports administration, marketing and beyond – through internships, clinicals and class observations, research projects, student employment and graduate assistantships. Frazier further adds to the University's mission toward academic excellence through his work as a co-instructor of the LESM 341 course since 2017, and encourages his athletic training staff to serve as adjunct instructors in NIU's Department of Kinesiology and Physical Education program.



Throughout my time at NIU, we have worked hard to ensure that the impact of Athletics on all students extends well beyond just providing tickets to competitions, and that the athletic department contributes to the overall university experience for students and staff. – *Sean T. Frazier*

As part of the University's vision to strengthen campus and community partnerships, beginning in July 2020 the NIU RecWell program moved operations to Intercollegiate Athletics. This move allows Athletics to serve an even larger portion of the student body and further strengthen the connection between NIU's Division I student-athletes and other students on campus. With this change, NIU Athletics now includes management of the club and intramural sports programs and oversight of the NIU Recreation Center, the Outdoor Recreation Sports Complex and the office of Outdoor Adventures. This union comes on the heels of 2019's transition of the Huskie Marching Band and Silverettes to Athletics and the enhanced connection with the NIU Esports program as they joined with other Mid-American Conference institutions to create the Esports Collegiate Conference in early 2020.

Engagement

Collaboration

Athletics is committed to its role as a partner in every aspect of our campus and in the community. *The development and growth of these partnerships support the University's goal to strengthen the NIU identity as a public university that combines educational opportunity with student engagement.*

NIU Athletics has a constant presence on and off-campus, from participation at NIU orientation sessions and on-campus events to attending community events such as the local Expos, CornFest, NIU Days at Kane County Cougars, White Sox and Chicago Cubs, Tuesdays on the Town, and NIU Kite Fest. These events help to not only promote ticket sales, but also **give exposure to NIU and NIU Athletics.**



Supporting Local Schools and Libraries

NIU Athletics, under the guidance of Sean T. Frazier, has made great strides toward connecting with local schools and libraries in DeKalb County to support children in our community.

Starting the summer of 2019, NIU Athletics worked with the DeKalb and Sycamore public libraries to provide football ticket vouchers as prizes for their summer reading programs, capped off by a visit from Victor E. Huskie at their end of the summer parties.

Also in 2019, with support of the Mid-American Conference and the College Football Playoff Foundation, **NIU Athletics was able to provide a \$5,000 donation to the DeKalb and Sycamore school districts to support specific programming for each district.**

Furthermore, NIU Athletics has created and continued to host an annual “Education Day” at a selected women’s basketball game. Local elementary schools are invited to bring students to the game and participate in educational fun – whether through STEM demonstrations on the concourse prior to the game, or a workbook provided for students to use skills they have learned while also enjoying the game. The NIU student-athletes have also served as mentors at Clinton Rosette and Huntley Middle School, meeting once a week with an assigned student, developing a relationship and serving as a role model.



These are just a few of the campus and community partnerships NIU Athletics has made over the past five years and does not include the hours and hours of community service performed by our teams and student-athletes, as well as the individual causes they support, ranging from game days and promotions devoted to cancer (breast, pediatric), canned food drives, diabetes, Diversity and Inclusion, military appreciation and more. *Through all these various collaborations and connections, not to mention welcoming alumni, fans, families and guests from across the country for our competitive and Convocation Center events, Huskie*

Athletics remains one of the most visible and connected units on campus.

Revenue Generation

Fundraising Growth

In alignment with the University's goals toward fiscal sustainability, through fundraising efforts and campaign priorities, Frazier and the NIU Athletics Department organized the "Campaign to Sustain," a major fundraising initiative focused on ensuring NIU Athletics' ability to carry on its rich tradition while lifting future Huskies to new heights and instilling NIU alumni and the campus community with pride, and continues to produce results.



As of November 2020, the Campaign, which includes opportunities to support Cost of Attendance scholarships and capital projects, has raised over \$2.16 million in support of Huskie student-athletes and sports programs.

In terms of fundraising, the Huskie Athletic Fund (HAF), the official fundraising arm of NIU Athletics, has continued to raise the bar under Frazier, **averaging more than \$2.5 million in total donations over the past seven years.** With the recent opening of the Northwestern Medicine Sports Performance Center and Phi Sigma Kappa Alumni Association of NIU Nutrition Center, the renovation of the Dave and Linda Nelson Suite in the NIU Convocation Center, along with the implementation of Huskies Invest: A Week of Giving generating over \$1 million over the last four years, financial support for NIU Athletics continues to climb under Frazier.

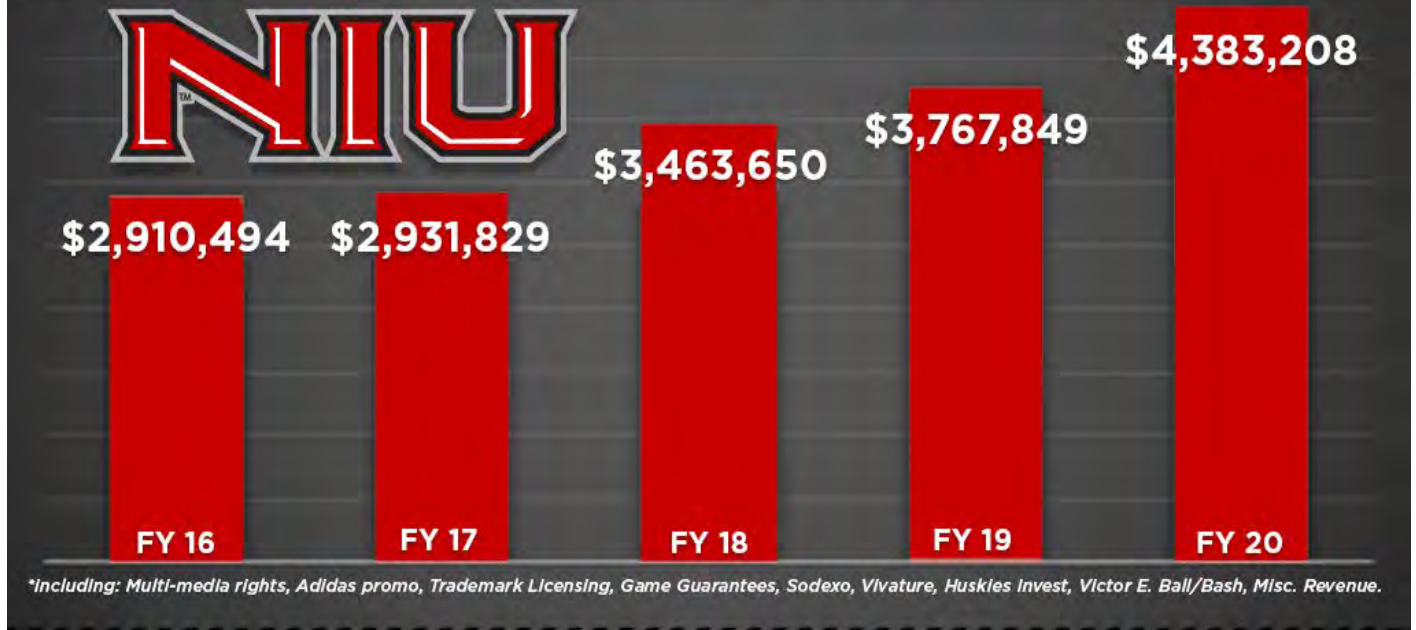
In 2015-16, Frazier established the Victor E. Ball, the Huskies' premiere fundraising event, which specifically supports Cost of Attendance fundraising initiatives. Since its inception, **the Victor E. Ball has raised almost \$635,000 in support of Huskie student-athletes,** and has grown into a "can't miss" event. In an effort to keep the event fresh and exciting, it evolved into the Victor E. Bash in 2020. Due to COVID-19, the Bash was transitioned into a hugely successful virtual fundraising event, surpassing the \$150,000 goal established prior to coronavirus shutdowns.

NIU also has signed and/or renegotiated multiple contracts resulting in increased revenues for Huskie Athletics over the last six years. Learfield, NIU's multimedia and sponsorship partner, met its revenue goals for the first time in 2017-18, while deals with Adidas, Sodexo and Learfield Licensing have all paid dividends for the Huskies. The NIU Convocation Center, which became a part of Intercollegiate Athletics in 2013, has attracted popular acts like Thomas Rhett, Brad Paisley, Casting Crowns, Second City, WWE Live and Monster Trucks since Frazier's arrival. In 2018-19, more than 250,000 people walked through the doors of the Convocation Center to attend NIU Athletics events, high school graduations, job and career fairs, cheerleading, IHSA and IESA competitions and more. *Exposure through these events further supports the University's goals toward student recruitment and regional engagement.*



Revenue Generation

DEPARTMENTAL REVENUE STREAMS



REVENUE STREAM HIGHLIGHTS

	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20
Multi-Media Rights	\$785,000**** (Learfield)	\$785,000**** (Learfield)	\$745,000**** (Learfield)	\$450,000 (Learfield)	\$625,000 (Learfield)
Adidas Promo Allocation	\$310,000	\$285,000**	\$279,000	\$271,000	\$500,350
Trademark Licensing	\$131,753.78	\$125,000**	\$125,000	\$135,000	\$147,927
Football Game Guarantee	\$1,215,000	\$1,177,000	\$1,353,000	\$1,908,000	\$1,995,000
MBB Game Guarantee	\$185,000	\$167,500	\$295,000	\$195,000	\$267,500
WBB Game Guarantee	\$35,000	\$18,000	\$25,000	\$43,000	\$25,000
Sodexo***	\$67,798	\$92,532	\$146,150	\$172,278.47	\$152,959
Huskies Invest			\$115,000	\$272,887	\$303,472
Victor E. Ball/Bash	\$180,942	\$176,797	\$170,500	\$110,684	\$156,000
Vivature		\$105,000	\$210,000	\$210,000	\$210,000

Frazier Administration

** No Bowl participation / *** Sodexo FY16 reflects commissions only; FY17 beyond reflects commissions, annual payment, in house catering savings /**** Capital Subsidy

Diversity and Inclusion

Frazier has always made diversity and inclusion a priority, *supporting the University's goal and ongoing commitment to promoting equity, inclusivity, and social justice.*

In addition to past honors such as Frazier's **Distinguished Service Award** for his leadership of MOAA in 2014, Frazier and the **NIU Athletics department received the NCAA and Minority Opportunities Athletic Association (MOAA) Diversity and Inclusion Award (2016)**, an award designed to recognize practices, policies and initiatives that embrace and celebrate diversity and inclusion within intercollegiate athletics.

Frazier was also honored for his work with advancing diversity and inclusion on-campus with the **2019 Deacon Davis Diversity Award** presented to him by the NIU Presidential Commission on the Status of Minorities (PSCM). This award recognizes significant contributions made to the improvement of the status of minorities on the NIU campus.



Changing the Industry

While managing through the challenges brought on by COVID-19, Frazier has taken on the added task of co-chairing the LEAD1 Association's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Working Group. Along with Dr. China Jude, Senior Associate Athletic Director and SWA at the University of Wyoming, the working group's goal was to produce a white paper with proposal of an actionable plan for FBS institutions to help

create more opportunities for people of color to advance in athletics administration, thereby increasing diverse senior leadership at the highest levels of intercollegiate athletics.

Social Justice

Diversity and inclusion are woven into the very fabric of NIU and NIU Athletics.

A few of the efforts that have been implemented just this fiscal year are:

- **Athletics Social Justice Education** - providing education on the history of race relations and social justice in our country to NIU student-athletes.
 - NIU student-athletes also created the NIU Student-Athlete Diversity & Inclusion Committee to lend their voice and actions to promote positive change on campus. Their first initiative was the Student-Athlete Unity March and Rally on October 10, 2020.
- **Mental Health Check-Ins** - providing student-athletes with continuing check-ins to give them an opportunity to work through their feelings with professional counselors.
- **Town Hall Meetings** – providing education and support to NIU Athletics coaches and staff with specific programming on Diversity and Inclusion.



We may not be able to fix all of society's ills, but we pledge to be champions for justice and equality. – Sean T. Frazier

Looking Forward

I truly appreciate you taking the time to review the growth of the Athletics program over the past five years. While we have already achieved so much, we are never standing still and look to continue to move our department forward *and to remain in alignment and support of the vision and goals of the University.*

Goals

- Enhance budget development and reporting process
- Review new and existing purchasing agreements to identify maximum operational efficiencies
- Align 3-year budget plan with campus
- **Continual growth of fundraising events and revenue streams**
- Leverage social platforms utilized during COVID-19 to better connect (cultivation/stewardship) donors with coaches/student-athletes (i.e. AD Happy Hours, Questions for Coach, Student-Athlete Thank You Videos, HAF Newsletter, GIK Partner Recognition)
- Utilize other resources (i.e. call center) to assist in reaching out and connecting with lapsed donors
- Nominate and promote student-athletes and staff on Campus/Conference/Regional/National Levels
- **Continue to maintain and exceed a cumulative athletic department GPA of a 3.2-3.3**
- Utilize GamePlan Platform to develop additional diversity and inclusion supplemental education/workshops for student-athletes
- Utilize Helper Helper Platform to track and modify community service engagement for student-athletes
- Provide staff with professional development opportunities (Campus/Conference/Regional/National)
- Win the Reese and Jacoby Trophies
- Continue to highlight the accolades of NIU student-athletes in competition, the classroom, and the community
- Use website, emails to media and campus, and social media to promote departmental and sport programs special events and revenue generation efforts (i.e. Huskie Bowl and Gear Sale, The Victors, golf and baseball season opening dinners, etc.)
- **Increase student engagement** by increasing presence across multiple platforms on-campus (i.e. digital ticketing app, NIU Welcome Days, NIU Clearinghouse Digital signage, Huskie Pride committee, 125th Anniversary committee, Homecoming re-imagined committee, etc.)
- Grow NIU Social Media channel following and create LinkedIn and TikTok channels
- Increase student attendance at football games
- **Grow attendance/revenue at all 4 ticketed sports** (football, volleyball, women's basketball and men's basketball)
- Continue to grow the relationship with external companies that service our athletic programs
- **Continued focus on high level customer service**
- Find efficiencies and cost savings department-wide
- **Provide the best student-athlete experience possible for our athletes all while focusing on student-athlete well-being (health and safety regulations)**
- Continue to bring in new low risk profitable events such as graduation and cheer events
- Continue work on small project renovations and upgrades as prioritized with A&E services
- **Continue conversations and positive actions to make a positive difference in areas of social justice and student-athlete experience for all student-athletes**



Sean T. Frazier
Associate Vice President/Director of Athletics
Northern Illinois University
Convocation Center
1525 West Lincoln Highway
DeKalb, IL 60115
niuhuskies.com